

THE MODERN RETI

AN ANTI-SLAV
REPERTOIRE



ALEXANDER DELCHEV





THE MODERN RÉTI

AN ANTI-SLAV REPERTOIRE

ALEXANDER DELCHEV

Chess Stars

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Current Theory and Practice Series

The Modern Réti. An Anti-Slav Repertoire

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Foreword

In 2010, ex-world champion Antoaneta Stefanova invited me to assist her in preparing for the forthcoming FIDE Gran Prix series of tournaments. My concrete task looked relatively easy to me – I had to improve her “service”, that is, the effectiveness of her play with White.

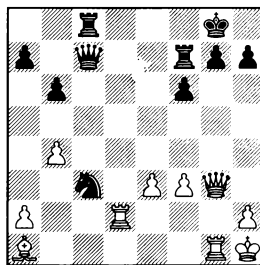
Without sufficient familiarity with top level women’s chess and, more importantly, with Antoaneta’s playing style and psychology, I rushed to acquaint her with the latest opening developments in the most popular lines. My analyses were detailed and promised a solid edge in various topical variations.

However, this approach failed altogether. We were ruthlessly punished twice and she was generally lacking in confidence in the most principled openings. Although her result was not a catastrophe (3-4th place), for the next tournament we decided to make a U-turn and embrace another approach. This time, we would be aiming to throw the opponents out of their home preparation and made them use their own brains in unfamiliar positions. We switched from move-by-move memorisation to plan-oriented thinking. This tactic proved to be

especially unpleasant for the Chinese girls, who were deprived of their opening preparation and had to fight on our ground. The result was excellent – a victory in the last game would have brought first prize.

Stefanova–Hou Yifan FIDE GP Ulaanbaatar 2010

1.♠f3 ♠f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♙g2
♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 b6 7.♙b2 c5
8.e3 ♙b7 9.♠c3 ♠c6 10.cxd5 ♠xd5
11.♠xd5 ♖xd5 12.d4 ♠a5 13.♠h4
(13.dxc5!±, Part 8) 13...♗d8 14.dxc5
♙xh4 15.gxh4 ♖xh4 16.♙xb7 ♠xb7
17.c6 ♠c5 18.♗d4 ♖h6 19.♙ad1 ♙ac8
20.b4 ♠a4 21.♙a1 e5 22.♗xe5 ♗g6+
23.♙h1 ♖xc6+ 24.f3 f6 25.♗g3 ♙f7
26.♙g1 ♠c3 27.♙d2 ♖c7



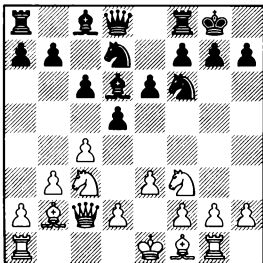
28.♗g2 (28.♗g4+-) 28...
♠b5 29.e4 (29.♙xf6!+-) 29...♠a3
30.♗g4 ♠c4 31.♙d3 ♠e5 32.♙xe5

fxe5 33.♔gd1 ♖cf8 34.♗d7 ♜c6 35.♗xf7 ♗xf7 36.♗d8+ ♖f8 37.♗xf8+ ♗xf8 38.♜f5+ and a draw was signed 20 moves later.

The Chinese super-GM who eventually won the tournament and the Grand Prix and went on to become a World Champion, was visibly nervous during the opening. She had to find a series of accurate moves over the board, spent a lot of effort and, not surprisingly, committed some serious mistakes in the middlegame, being short of time. One final blow on move 28 or 29, and Stefanova would have won the tournament.

This experience has convinced me that in the computer era one might achieve better practical results with a flexible opening strategy, based on understanding of the middlegames plans.

One year later I have decided to present my analyses to the reader. Many of them deal with positions which are blank spots in opening theory. In my opinion, the most interesting section is about the bayonet attack, where Slav fans face a head-on assault on their king after 1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♖f6 4.♖c3 e6 5.♜c2 ♖bd7 6.b3 ♗d6 7.♗b2 0-0 8.♗g1



Instead of the usual struggle for gradual equalisation in the Classical Slav, Black has to solve urgent, very concrete problems – how to avoid a debacle in the next 10-15 moves. Don't worry though, for less blood-thirsty players (of which I am one!), I also cover the set-up with 8.♗e2. This leads us to the question:

For whom is this book written?

Club players have probably noticed that their opponents as a rule are well prepared against the central openings 1.e4/1.d4. If you are disappointed with your results, or just tired of endlessly studying the latest analyses in the most explored variations, you'll find here a viable repertoire versus 1...d5. You might also use my suggestions as surprise weapons.

Note, however, that my work has nothing in common with the SOS-type articles. It was meant for a top-level professional and this repertoire is designed to serve for many years. It is based on complex positions without early pawn clashes in the centre. This shifts the focus towards middlegame plans and reduces the impact of home-brewed novelties. At the same time, it is no less ambitious than the Sicilian, or the Grünfeld, which were the subject of my previous books. Most of the material is fresh and is not covered anywhere else.

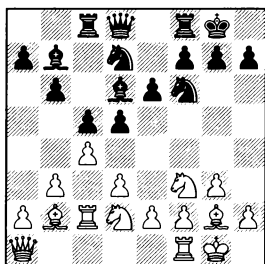
*Alexander Delchev
February 2012*

Introduction

In 1923 Richard Réti introduced an amazing new set-up:

Réti–Fischer Vienna 1923

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♙g2 c6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♙b2 ♙e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 b6 9.♘bd2 ♙b7 10.♞c1 ♞c8 11.♞c2 c5 12.♞a1 ♙d6



13.cxd5 exd5 14.♘h4 ♞e8 15.♘f5 ♙f8 16.♘c4 ♞c7 17.♘ce3 ♞b8 18.♙xf6 ♘xf6 19.♘h6+ gxh6 20.♞xf6, with a big advantage.

Réti was a universal player who had been successfully opening with both 1.d4 and 1.e4, but in this game he placed his faith in a flank strategy. After the double fianchetto, he continued his attack with pieces to

achieve a winning position in only 19 moves. At this stage he had no pawns beyond the third rank!

This strategy brought him a notable success in that year. He beat Rubinstein and Tartakower, but his biggest triumph was yet to come. In the New York super-tournament of 1924, Réti used his system to crush the reigning World Champion Capablanca (his first loss in 8 years!), the ex-Champion Lasker and the future Champion Alekhine. After that, no one would dispute the name of the new-born opening system.

Réti was the first to notice that the mainstream openings were running short of fresh ideas. Lasker and Capablanca also thought that chess would suffer a “draw death”, but they were too strong to worry about that. Réti was the thinker who pushed forward chess understanding.

To be sure, his ideas were swiftly put under the microscope. Black has since discovered some solid set-ups which has taken the sting out of his system to some extent. However, White has been struggling

lately to achieve even the slightest advantage in the Slav/Meran and the Queen's Gambit. These openings have been explored in detail up to move 30. This has brought about the now frequent phenomenon of some grandmasters' games consisting entirely of home preparation. The players sit behind the board and finish the game without having made a single move of their own. This approach requires most of all a photographic memory. 90% of the time for preparation goes into opening analysis and tracking the latest trends in the theory. Many youngsters are willing to pay the price in their pursuit of quick results. The flip-side is that the flood of information has made the latest novelties available to all. Nowadays even a very weak opponent might catch you unawares and crush you without a fight. That's why many good players begin to revise their approach. They seek flexibility and surprise. That accounts for the growing popularity of flank openings as the English and the Réti. Frankly, I believe that it will be more and more difficult and unrewarding to play the most principled openings.

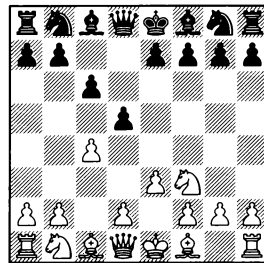
The modern Réti has significantly evolved in the last few years. It has transformed into an English-Réti hybrid which is often used as a tricky move order aimed at sidestepping certain systems. Instead of employing a double fianchetto versus any and every black set-up,

White often transposes to other openings. For instance: 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 – Anti-Nimzo, or 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 – Anti-Grünfeld.

In this book I consider only the pure Réti schemes which arise after 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4. Note that Sicilian fans might prefer 1.c4 and turn to 2.♘f3 in the event of 1...e6 or 1...c6. Thus they would avoid 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4, which is by far the sharpest Black's response.

The main section of my book is the Anti-Slav set-up:

1. ♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!.



It borrows from Réti the idea of delaying d2-d4. White does not rule out this move permanently, he merely waits for the best moment for it. In my opinion, this approach has no drawbacks. The pluses are obvious:

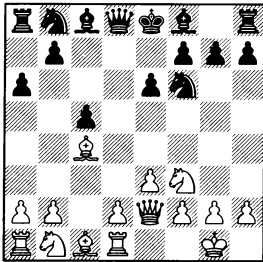
We avoid the Slav because our move order discourages an early ...♗g4 or ...♗f5 owing to the possibility of ♖b3.

We avoid the main lines of the Chebanenko System.

We rule out the Noteboom and other “triangle” variations.

We can always transpose to some mainline Meran, but we should do so only rarely, when the resulting position is known to be in White’s favour. My repertoire hardly requires any knowledge of the Meran. I examine instead a kingside pawn storm with ♖g1 and g4 , and, as an alternative, quiet development with ♕e2 and kingside castling. In both plans, the delay in playing d4 enables dangerous tactical blows, based on the latent power of the b2 -bishop. In the latter set-up, White commonly controls the centre with f2-f4 , leaving the long dark diagonal open.

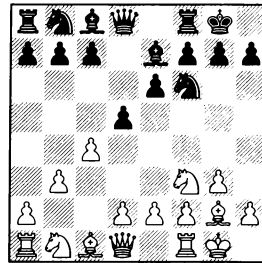
The delay in playing d4 is also very useful versus the Queen’s Gambit Accepted: $1.\text{♕f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3! ♖f6 4.♕xc4 e6 5.0-0 a6 6.♞e2! c5 7.♞d1!$



We could have transposed to the QGA with $7.\text{d4}$, having sidestepped the Romanishin Variation with $\dots\text{♕g4}$, but the rook move contains more venom. The main point is that it keeps open the option of d2-d3! ,

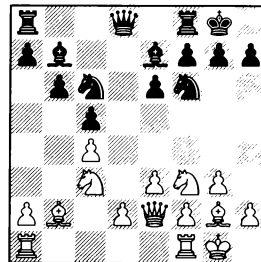
which will be good if Black advances his b -pawn to b4 .

My proposed repertoire would have been vulnerable to move order tricks had not I devoted two sections to $1.\text{♕f3 d5 2.c4 e6}$. Now $3.\text{d4 c6}$ would have been awkward, so I consider $3.\text{g3}$, with the main branches $3\dots\text{dxc4 4.♞a4+!}$ and $3\dots\text{♕f6 4.♕g2 ♕e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3!?$



I’m not against the Catalan, but it has been heavily explored lately and the character of the game is more suitable for Kramnik than for a club player.

In the diagram position Black can choose to keep the tension in the centre, when we should switch to d4 , or he can take on c4 , e.g. $6\dots\text{c5 7.♕b2 ♖c6 8.e3 b6 9.♖c3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♕b7 11.♞e2}$



Introduction

This variation is still inadequately covered in opening books. Mihail Marin advocates in his *The English Opening, volume 2* a plan with d2-d4, but it is ineffective, for many reasons.

I investigate the classic plan of a kingside pawn storm with f2-f4/g2-g4, also keeping h2-h4-h5-h6 in mind. It leads to strategically unbalanced positions without forcing variations, where the cost of every move is higher for Black because his king is in danger.

Of course, I also examine the reversed Benoni set-up 1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4. This part is slightly out of step with the rest of the book. I consider three different options for White.

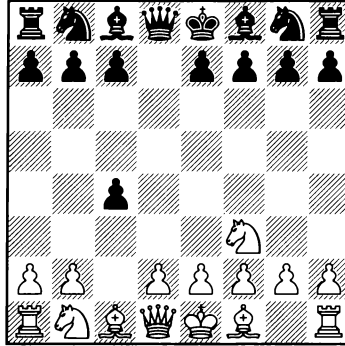
The emphasis, however, is on the extremely sharp gambit 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5 5.c5 a5 6.♙b5+!? c6 7.♙c4.

I also analyse in detail 3.e3 ♘c6! 4.b4. I'm afraid that general considerations and plans would be useless here. White aims to open up the centre at any cost and tactics should prevail over strategy.

Finally, I should like to stress that most of the book is based on my own original analyses. I have found my sources to be mostly unsatisfactory for the aims of this book, so I had to develop my own theory in many lines. You'll find very few overlaps with other publications. That should give you an edge over your opponents.

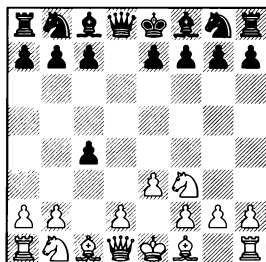
Anti-Queen's Gambit Accepted

1.♞f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4



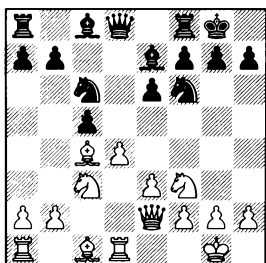
Main Ideas

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3!



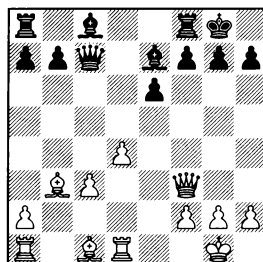
White's set-up is rather deceiving. It looks like play will transpose sooner or later to the QGA main lines, but this is true only with an important addition – we can choose to enter only the main lines that are better for White! One example is the Steinitz system:

3...c5 4.♙xc4 ♘f6 5.0-0 e6
6.♚e2! ♘c6 7.♞d1! ♙e7 (7...a6
8.d4! b5 8.dxc5!) 8.♘c3 0-0 9.d4



White gets a favourable IQP position because 9...♞c7 would give him a serious lead in development after 10.dxc5! ♙xc5 11.a3!.

9...cxd4 , 10.♘xd4! ♘xd4
11.exd4 ♘d5 12.♞f3 ♘xc3
13.bxc3 ♞c7 14.♙b3

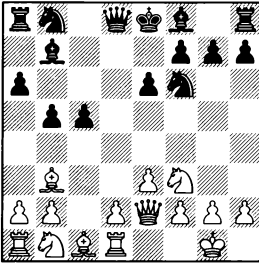


White is dominating all over the board. He can develop his initiative in the centre after 14...♙d6 15.c4! ♙xh2+ 16.♙h1 ♙d6 17.c5 ♙e7 18.♙f4 ♞c6 19.♞xc6 bxc6 20.♙a4 ♙d7 21.♙ab1 ♙fd8 22.♙b7 ♙f8 23.♙xd7, Gelfand-Adianto, Cap d'Agde 1998, or attack on the kingside following 14...♙b8 15.♙d3! ♙d6 16.♞h5 h6 17.c4 b6 18.♙h3.

Of course, most QGA fans do not put their knight on c6, but prefer to fianchetto their bishop first:

6...a6 7.♙d1! b5 8.♙b3 ♙b7

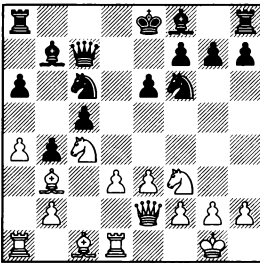
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4



9.a4!

The point of White's design is to provoke ...b4 and then fix the backward pawn on c5 with d3. This is the reason White has refrained from d4 in favour of 7.♞d1. White aims to reach this typical position:

9...b4 10.d3! ♟c6 11.♟bd2 ♞c7 12.♟c4

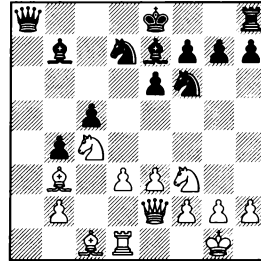


White's game is easier. His plan is to build up a pawn barrier against the b7-bishop with d3-e4, then develop the queen's bishop on f4. As a rule, trading the knights favours

White as it leaves him with the better bishops. See **game 2 Tomashevsky-Ganguly**, Moscow 2007, where he finished off the opponent with a kingside attack.

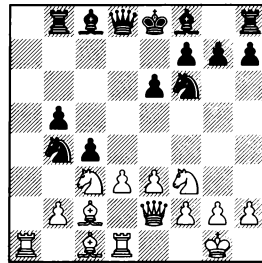
Another version of this structure arise after:

9...♟bd7 10.axb5 axb5 11.♞xa8 ♞xa8 12.♟a3! b4 13.♟c4 ♟e7 14.d3!



The open a-file could be only in White's favour. Black can also try:

8...♟c6 9.a4 ♞b8 10.axb5 axb5 11.♟c3 c4 12.♟c2 ♟b4 13.d3!



The open files underline White's lead in development.

Points to remember:

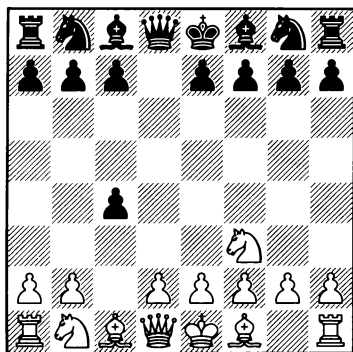
White plays ♞d1 before moving the d-pawn.

Then White meets ...♟c6 with d4 and recaptures on d4 by knight.

If Black plays an early ...a6 and ...b5, White tries to provoke ...b4 and puts his central pawns to d3, e4.

Step by Step

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4



Instead of fortifying the d5-pawn, QGA fans prefer an open centre and easy piece development. They might even argue that 1.♘f3 has deprived White of the aggressive option of 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4!?

In fact, the delay of d4 brings about positions of independent significance and enables many new possibilities for White.

3.e3!

3.♘a3 a6 4.♘xc4 b5 5.♘e3 ♗b7 offers Black comfortable equality.

3...c5

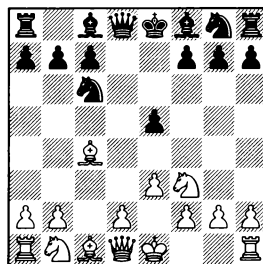
Black hopes to transpose to the QGA with ...♘f6, ...e6. The move order is irrelevant for this set-up.

Alternatives are:

a) 3...b5?!

Black is unable to hold the gambit pawn so this move only wastes time and create weaknesses on the queenside: 4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5 6.b3, with an initiative.

b) 3...♘c6 4.♗xc4 e5



Now we can follow up in the Sicilian style with 5.♞c2 ♗d6 6.a3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.b4, but:

5.d4! is more unpleasant. Then 5...exd4 6.0-0! ♘f6 7.exd4 only looks like the QGA with 3.e3 e5, because the knight is already committed

to c6 at the expense of ...♙d6. Thus Black cannot castle now and 7...♙e7 8.d5!± is gloom for him. Perhaps that is why Ivanchuk and other players prefer:

5...e4. Indeed, the position after 6.♟d2 ♖g5 7.g3 ♜f6 8.♜c3 ♖g6 9.♜d5 ♜xd5 10.♙xd5 ♙f5, Drozdovskij-Ivanchuk, Odessa 2007, is unclear. However, White can hamper Black's natural development by:

6.♖b3!

Now 6...♖f6 7.♜e5 ♜xe5 8.dxe5 ♖f5 9.g4! ♖f3 10.♙g1↑ would give White the upper hand so Black is forced to concessions – the knight must go to the edge of the board. After:

6...♜h6 7.♜fd2 ♖g5 (7...f5 8.♜c3 ♙d7 9.♙e2) 8.♙f1 (This is only a temporary retreat. The bishop will return to an active position very soon.) 8...f5 9.♜c3 ♜b4 10.♜b5, White has the more active pieces.

c) 3...♙g4 4.♙xc4 e6

This is a clumsy attempt to transpose to the Romanishin Variation of the QGA. After 5.♖b3! ♙xf3 6.gxf3,



the thematic pawn sac 6...♜d7? does not work and Black must resort to the passive:

6...♖c8 7.d4 ♜f6 8.♜c3 where White has the bishop pair and a strong centre. He could always meet ...c7-c5 by d4-d5!, opening play to his favour. For instance: 8...♜bd7?! 9.e4 a6 10.♙e3 b5 (10...c5 11.d5) 11.♙xe6!? fxe6 12.♖xe6+ ♙e7 13.e5±. White's attack is worth more than a piece here. More clever is:

8...a6!, hoping for 9.e4?! b5 10.♙e2 c5!, but 9.♙e2! anticipates this idea (9...c5 10.d5). Play might continue 9...♜bd7 10.e4 c5 11.d5! exd5 12.♜xd5 ♜xd5 13.♖xd5 ♖c7 14.♙e3 ♙d8 (14...♙d6 15.0-0-0±) 15.0-0-0 ♙e7. White can develop his initiative with 16.f4 0-0 17.e5 or 16.♙hg1 g6 (16...0-0 17.♙h6 ♙f6 18.♖d6±) 17.f4 0-0 18.e5.

d) 3...♙e6

I.Sokolov has been testing this idea lately. Now 4.♜a3 c5 5.♜xc4 ♜c6 6.b3 ♜f6 7.♙b2 g6= has no bite so White should go for the aggressive:

4.♜g5! ♙d5 5.e4!



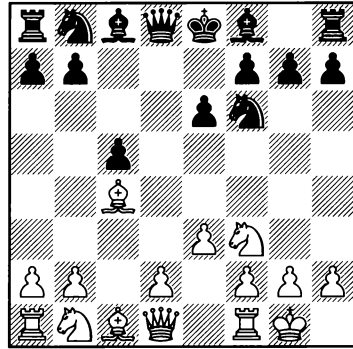
5...♙c6

5...e6 should be met by 6.exd5 (6.d4 looks interesting, but after 6...♙c6 7.♙xc4 ♙e7! 8.h4 h6 9.♗xe6 fxe6 10.♖h5+ ♔f8 11.♙xe6 ♖e8 12.♗f5+ ♗f6 13.d5 ♙d7 14.e5 ♙xe6 15.dxe6 ♖h5 16.♖xh5 ♗xh5 17.g4 ♗c6! Black gains the initiative.) 6...♖xg5 7.dxe6 ♖e5+ 8.♖e2 ♗c6 9.exf7+ ♔xf7 10.♙d1! ♖xe2+ 11.♙xe2 ♗e5 12.b3! (12.♗a3? ♙xa3 13.bxa3 ♗f6 14.♙b2 ♗d3 was in Black's favour in Panchenko-Rozentalis, Lvov 1987.) 12...♗d3 (or 12...cxb3 13.f4 ♗c6 14.♙c4+ ♔g6 15.f5+ ♔xf5 16.♖f1+ ♔e5 17.♗c3 ♗a5 18.axb3 ♗xc4 19.bxc4 ♔e6 20.♗b5 ♔d7 21.♖f7+ ♗e7 22.♙a3 c6 23.♗d4 ♔e8 24.♖f2±) 13.♖f1 ♗f6 14.bxc4 ♗xc1 15.♔xc1±.

6.♙xc4 e6 7.d3!

Black's bishop is extremely clumsy at c6. It takes the best place for the queen's knight and rules out ...c7-c5 which is an essential move for controlling the centre. White will comfortably complete development and push d3-d4 to dominate the board, for instance, 7...♗f6 8.♗c3 h6 9.♗f3±. Instead, in Grandelius-I.Sokolov, Stockholm 2010, Black made another mistake: 7...♙e7?! 8.♖g4! ♗f6 9.♖h3! ♖d7 (9...h6 10.♗xf7 ♔xf7 11.♖xe6++-) 10.0-0 ♗a6 when 11.♗d2! would have assured White of a big advantage. The knight is heading for e5. Besides, after 11.a3 b5 12.♙a2 ♗c5 13.♗c3 a5 14.♙e3 h5 15.♖fd1, Black's king would also be very vulnerable.

4.♙xc4 ♗f6 5.0-0 e6



6.♖e2!

Note this fine point. We are following the typical QGA scheme of development, but Black cannot do the same. His set-up is connected with...b5 which would offer White a lever for a queenside attack with a2-a4. The delay of d4 enables new possibilities which face Black with some problems.

Now Black chooses between:

A. 6...♗c6 and B. 6...a6.

6...♗bd7 has never been tested in this position. The knight is passive on d7 and that could be underlined with 7.d4 a6 8.a4!, for instance:

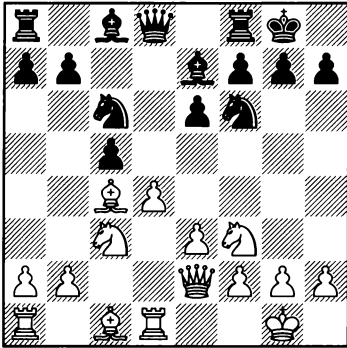
8...♖c7 9.e4! cxd4 10.e5 ♗b6 11.♙b3 ♗fd5 12.♗xd4±;

8...cxd4 9.exd4 ♙e7 (9...♙d6 10.♗c3 0-0 11.♗e5±) 10.♗c3 0-0 11.♖d1 ♗b6 12.♙b3 ♗bd5 13.♗e5 ♙d7 14.♖d3!±.

A. 6...♞c6 7.♞d1!

The point of White's strategy is to be flexible and keep all the options open. Now 7...a6 will finally see 8.d4! when 8...b5 would face 9.dxc5! – see line B.

7...♞e7 8.♞c3 (or 8.d4 cxd4 9.♞c3!) 8...0-0 (8...a6 9.d4 b5 10.dxc5!) 9.d4



We have reached by transposition the Steinitz Variation of the QGA. It has been unpopular lately as it offers White a good version of an IQP position. He has not lost tempos on ♞d3xc4 like in the Nimzo, nor on a4 (this comes in a set with a hole on b4), like in one of the main lines of the QGA. As a result, White usually achieves to relocate his queen to a more active place on the kingside and gains a lasting initiative.

9...cxd4

After 9...♞c7 10.dxc5! ♞xc5 11.a3! White is way ahead in deve-

lopment in this symmetrical position: 11...a6 12.b4 ♞d6 13.♞b2 ♞e5 (13...♞d7 14.♞ac1±) 14.♞xe5 ♞xe5 15.f4!± ♞d6 (15...♞xc3 16.♞xc3 b5 17.♞xf6 gxf6 18.♞d3 ♞b7 19.♞ac1 ♞b6 20.♞f2±) 16.♞ac1 ♞e7 17.♞c2 (or 17.♞d3 ♞d8 18.♞e4 ♞xe4 19.♞xe4±, Schmittiel-Aigner, Velden 2008) 17...b5 18.♞e4 ♞xe4 19.♞xe4 ♞b7 20.♞d4±.

Let us examine now both options:

A1. 10.exd4; A2. 10.♞xd4!

A1. 10.exd4

White hopes to use his knight against the enemy king so he keeps more pieces on the board. I suppose that Black should regroup for defence, starting with:

10...♞d5!?

It is risky to divert the queen's knight from the e5-square because White will occupy it immediately:

a) 10...♞b4 11.♞e5 ♞bd5 12.♞d3! lifting the rook to the kingside.

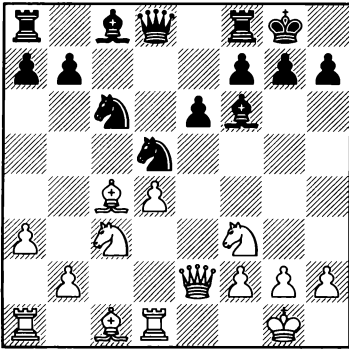
b) 10...♞a5!? 11.♞d3 b6 12.♞e5!?. Avrukh's recommendation. It might be insufficient for an advantage, but the other continuations have no bite. The queen is heading for g3. 12...♞d6 13.♞g5 g6! 14. ♞g3. In my opinion, Black can hold now with 14...♞h5! 15.♞g4 ♞g7 16.♞h6 ♞c8, followed by ...♞c6 or ...♞e7. Then Black can defend with ...f6 or ...f5. This idea is yet to be tested.

c) 10...a6 11.a3 ♖a5 12.♙a2 ♜d5 13.♜e5±.

11.a3

11.♙b3 would not change Black's plan with 11...♙f6.

11...♙f6



Vacating e7 for the c6-knight.

12.♞e4

12.♜e4 removes a hit from d5 and allows Black to complete development with 12...♙d7.

In Arutinian-Sprenger, Capelle la Grande 2010, White failed to achieve any advantage after 13.♜xf6+ ♞xf6 14.♞e4 ♜ce7 15.♙d3 ♞f5 16.♞h4 ♜g6 17.♞g3 (17.♙xf5 ♜xh4 18.♙xh7+ wins a pawn, but does not pose any problems to Black: 18...♜xh7 19.♜xh4 ♞ac8 20.♙d2 ♞c2 21.♞ab1 f6±.) 17...♜gf4 18.♙xf5 ♜e2+ 19.♜h1 ♜xg3+ 20.hxg3, draw.

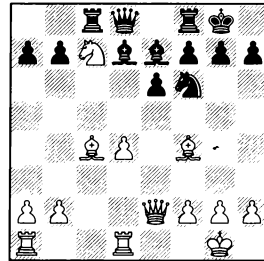
12...♜ce7

Black's set-up is known from the Semi-Tarrasch Defence. It is a bit passive, but very solid. Black needs only to develop his queen's bishop and then he can think about play of his own. The game I.Sokolov-Legky, France 2004, went further 13.♙d3 ♜g6 (13...g6) 14.♙d2 b6 15.♞g4 ♙b7 16.♜e4 ♞c8=.

A2. 10.♜xd4!

Practical results seem to indicate that White's play after this recapture is easier than after 10.exd4. The point is that the e2-queen now gets free access to f3 or h5. This continuation attracted attention after the spectacular debacle Topalov-Kharlov, FIDE-Wch k.o. New Delhi/Teheran 2000:

10...♜xd4 11.exd4 ♞e8 12.♜b5 ♞d8 13.♜c3 ♞e8 14.♜b5 ♞d8 15.♙f4 ♙d7 16.♜c7! ♞c8



17.d5! ♞xc7?

The only move was 17...exd5 18.♜xd5 ♞e8 19.♞d3 ♙a4 20.b3 ♙c6 21.♜xe7+ ♞xe7 22.♞ac1±, with a strong bishop pair.

18.d6 ♞c6 19.dxe7 ♞xe7 20.♙b5! ♞b6 21.♙xd7 ♜xd7 22.♞d2! e5

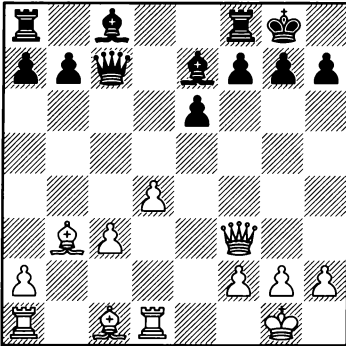
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4

23.♙e3 ♘c5 24.b4 ♘e4 25.♖c2 ♙xb4 26.a3+-, winning material.

10...♘d4

Symmetry does not help Black due to his undeveloped bishop on c8: 10...♖c7 11.♘xc6 ♖xc6 12.e4.

11.exd4 ♘d5 12.♖f3 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♖c7 14.♙b3



14...♙b8

The latest attempt of Black to revive the variation. He prepares ...b6 or even ...b5. Instead, 14...♙d6 15.c4! ♙xh2+ 16.♙h1 ♙d6 17.c5 ♙e7 18.♙f4 ♖c6 19.♖xc6 bxc6 20.♙a4 ♙d7 21.♙ab1 ♙fd8 22.♙b7 ♙f8 23.♙xd7 was better for White in Gelfand-Adianto, Cap d'Agde 1998.

15.♙d3! ♙d6

15...b6 16.♖h5 g6 17.♖h6 ♙d6 18.♙h3 f6 19.♙d2± leaves the e6-pawn very sensitive.

16.♖h5 h6 17.c4 b6 18.♙h3

White owns the initiative. Despite the exchanges, his kingside attack is looming, for instance: 18...♙f4 19.♖h4 ♙xc1 20.♙xc1 ♙b7 21.♙g3 ♙fd8 22.♙d1 ♙bc8 23.♖g4 g6 24.♙c2 ♙h8 25.♙e1, when 25...♖xc4? fails to 26.♖h4 ♙g7 27.♙xg6+-.

B. 6...a6 7.♙d1!

This idea of M.Marín from 1997 poses serious problems to Black. White anticipates 7...b5 8 ♙b3 ♙b7 when instead of the standard and innocuous d4, he has the nasty surprise 9 a4!.

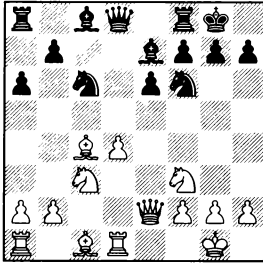
7...b5

7...♘c6 8.d4 is in White's favour:

a) 8...b5 9.dxc5! ♖c7 10.♙d3 ♙xc5 11.a4! b4 (11...bxa4 12.♙xa4 ♘b4 13.♙b5+±) 12.♘bd2 ♙b7 13.♘b3 ♙d6 14.♙d2 0-0 15.♙ac1 ♖e7 16.e4!, Kacheishvili-Krush, Las Vegas 2009. White has a significant advantage due to his active pieces and the weaknesses in the enemy's pawn structure. After the nearly forced 16...♘g4 17.h3 ♘ge5 18.♘xe5 ♘xe5 19.♙b1 ♙fc8, White could have added also the bishop pair advantage with 20.♘a5!±.

b) 8...cxd4 9.exd4 ♙e7 10.♘c3 0-0 is a typically worse for Black IQP position.

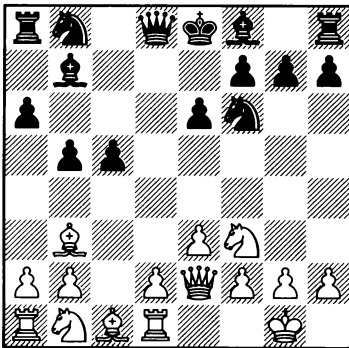
White can achieve a small plus with 11.d5 or maintain the tension with 11.♙g5.



See **game 1 Wojtaszek-Buhmann**, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

8.♟b3 ♟b7

8...♟c6 9.a4 ♟b8 10.axb5 axb5 11.♟c3 (11.d4 c4 12.♟c2 ♟b4 13.♟c3 ♟xc2 14.♟xc2 ♟d5 was unclear in Campbell-B.Lalic, CCF 2011) 11...c4 12.♟c2 ♟b4 13.d3!± cxd3 14.♟xd3 ♟xd3 15.♟xd3 ♟c7 16.e4 ♟e7, Rasmussen-Pina Vega, Havana 2011, when 17.e5! ♟d7 18.♟e4 ♟b7 19.♟c3 ♟d8 20.♟d6+ ♟xd6 21.exd6 0-0 22.♟e5 would have given White the edge.



9.a4!

We see the cunning idea behind 7.♟d1. White has waited for ...b5 to

switch the focus of the game to the queenside and force an important positional concession from Black. The big difference in comparison with the Classical QGA is that 9...♟bd7 10.axb5 axb5 11.♟xa8 ♟xa8 12.♟a3! b4 will be met by 13.♟c4 ♟e7 14.d3! followed up by e3-e4. Instead, Piket-Lautier, Amber-blindfold, Monte Carlo 1995 continued with:

12...♟xf3 13.gxf3 b4 14.♟b5 ♟b8 15.d4 ♟e7 16.e4 0-0 17.e5 ♟d5 (17...♟h5 18.f4 g6 19.d5 exd5 20.♟xd5 ♟b6 21.♟e4 ♟d8 22.♟xd8+ ♟xd8 23.♟a7±) 18.♟xd5 exd5 19.dxc5 ♟xe5 when 20.f4 ♟f3+ 21.♟xf3 ♟xb5 22.♟xd5 wins a pawn.

9...b4

Attempts to retain a flexible queenside pawn structure face Black with difficulties:

a) 9...♟b6

This was Black's choice in the source game Marin-Kaeding, Sitges 1997.

White chose 10.d4, but the position after 10...♟bd7 11.♟c3 b4 (11...c4 12.♟c2 b4 13.a5 ♟c7) 12.a5 ♟c7 13.♟a4 is unclear. Even more challenging is 10...c4!? 11.♟c2 ♟c6 12.axb5 axb5 13.♟xa8+ ♟xa8 14.♟c3 ♟e7 15.e4 ♟b4 16.♟b1 0-0 17.e5 ♟xf3 18.♟xf3 ♟fd5.

I think that White should try to use the fact that the pawn is still on d2 by:

10.axb5!? axb5 11.♟xa8 ♟xa8 12.♟c2!?

Enhancing the threat of ♖a3. Of course, 12.♟a3 c4 13.♙c2 is also possible, when 13...♟bd7 14.d3 ♙xa3 15.bxa3 c3 16.e4 0-0 should be pleasant for White due to his centre and the bishop pair.

12...♙e7 13.♟a3 b4 (12...c4 13.d3) 14.♟c4 ♜c7 15.b3. White has the better pieces.

b) 9...c4?! 10.♙c2 ♜b6 11.axb5 axb5 12.♞xa8 ♙xa8 13.d3!. This possibility assures White of the advantage.

10.d3!

Our plan is to build up a pawn barrier against the b7-bishop with d3-e4, then develop our queen's bishop to f4 and put a knight on c4. Then we could play on both flanks

thanks to our domination in the centre. Generally, we do not mind trading the knights as we will remain with the better bishops.

10...♟c6

Or 10...♙e7 11.♟bd2 0-0 12.♟c4 a5 13.e4 ♜c7 14.g3 ♟c6 15.♙f4±.

11.♟bd2 ♜c7

After 11...♟a5 12.♙c2 ♙e7 13.e4 ♜c7 we can swap one pair of knights: 14.♟b3 ♟xb3 15.♙xb3 h6 16.♟d2 (or 16.h3 0-0 17.♙e3!±), with good prospects.

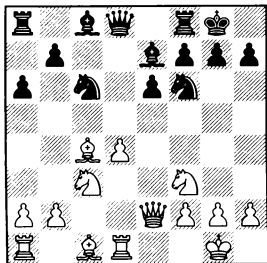
12.♟c4

White's play is easier. See **game 2 Tomashevsky-Ganguly**, Moscow 2007.

Complete Games

1. Wojtaszek-Buhmann Aix-les-Bains 24.03.2011

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3
e6 5.♙d3 dxc4 6.♙xc4 c5 7.0-0 a6
8.♚e2 ♘c6 9.♗d1 cxd4 10.exd4
♙e7 11.♘c3 0-0



12.♙g5

Another typical method of playing against the IQP is to prevent ♘b4 by 12.a3. Then Black answers 12...♘d5 13.♚e4 (13.♙a2!?) 13...♘f6 14.♚c2 ♘d5 15.♙a2 ♙f6 16.♘e4, with somewhat better prospects.

The isolated pawn is always a double-edged asset so most White players prefer to trade it gaining a small edge with 12.d5!? exd5 13.♘xd5 ♙d7! [13...♘xd5 14.♙xd5 ♚c7 (14...♚e8 15.♗e1) 15.♚e4 ♙f6 16.♘g5 ♙xg5 17.♙xg5±] 14.♙e3 ♘xd5 15.♙xd5 ♚e8±.

12...♘b4

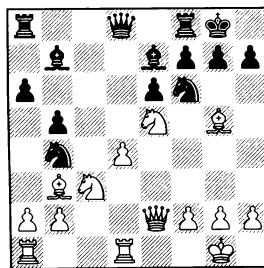
This is a very risky approach. Black gets full control of the d5-square, but he gives too much freedom to White's pieces in the centre.

Alternatives are:

a) 12...b5 13.♙xf6 (13.♙b3 ♘a5 14.♙c2 ♙b7 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♙e4±) 13...♙xf6 14.d5 bxc4 15.dxc6 ♚c7 16.♘e4 ♚xc6 17.♘xf6+ gxf6 18.♗ac1 ♙b7 19.♗xc4±.

b) 12...♘d5 13.♙xe7 ♘cxe7 14.♘e5 b5 15.♙xd5 ♘xd5 16.♘e4 ♙b7 17.♘c5 ♚e7±.

13.♘e5 b5 14.♙b3 ♙b7



15.♘xf7!

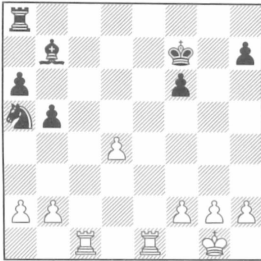
This move is not too difficult to find, but it is a novelty! Previously White had played 15.a4 or 15.♗ac1.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4

15...♞xf7 16.♞xe6 ♞f8

White's initiative proves to be very strong. 16...♞e8 17.a3 ♟c6 18.♟xf6 ♟xf6 19.♟e4 ♞xe6 20.♟xe6 also favours him.

17.♞e1 ♟c6 18.♟xf6 ♟xf6
19.♟e4 ♟a5 20.♟xf6+ ♟xf6
21.♞xf7+ ♞xf7 22.♟xf7+ ♟xf7
23.♞ac1

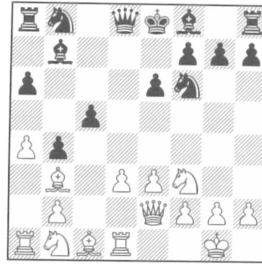


White has a clear edge. The general rule is that without queens, a rook+two pawns are stronger than a bishop+knight when the rooks have enough open files.

23...♟d5 24.♞c7+ ♟g6 25.b3
♟c6 26.♞d7 ♟b4 27.♞e3 ♞c8
28.h4 ♞c1+ 29.♟h2 ♟c6? (29...
♞a1 30.♞g3+ ♟f5 31.♞xh7 ♞xa2
32.h5 ♞xf2 33.h6±) 30.♞g3+ ♟f5
31.♞xh7 ♟d5 32.h5 ♞c2 33.h6 ♞xf2
34.♞hg7 1-0

2. Tomashevsky-Ganguly Moscow 16.02.2007

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 ♟f6
4.♟xc4 e6 5.0-0 a6 6.♞e2 c5
7.♞d1 b5 8.♟b3 ♟b7 9.a4 b4 10.d3



We shall meet the same pawn structure in Part 7, but White's bishop is on g2 there. On b3 it is more exposed to attacks (with ♟a5) and it looks very passive, but on the other hand, it may easily become the hero of a crushing kingside attack.

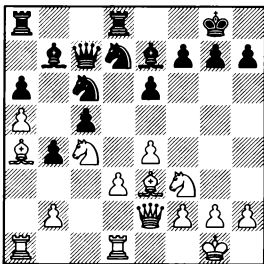
10...♟c6 11.♟bd2 ♞c7

I think that Black should have taken c4 under control with 11...♟a5 12.♟c2 ♟e7. Thus he would be able to change the pawn structure (which is not in his favour as it is now): 13.e4 (after 13.b3 ♟d5 14.♟b2 ♟c3 15.♟xc3 bxc3 16.♟b1 0-0 17.♟xc3 ♞c7 Black is a pawn down, but his pieces have plenty of good squares.) 13...♟d7 14.♟c4 ♟xc4 15.dxc4 ♞c7 16.e5 ♞d8 17.♟f4 0-0 18.♟g5 g6. Of course, White retains the initiative, but at least his attack is not too easy, e.g. 19.h4 h6 20.♟f3 h5.

12.♟c4 ♟g4?!

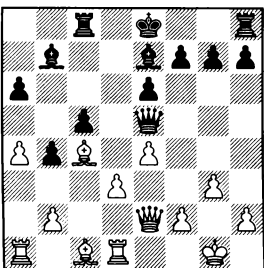
Black's idea to exchange the knights does not spare him from a kingside attack. He could have tried 12...♟e7 13.e4 0-0 14.a5 (14.♟g5 ♞ad8 15.♞e3 ♟h5; 14.h3 ♞ad8

15.♙e3 ♘d7 16.♞ac1 ♘b6 17.♘xb6
 ♜xb6 18.♜c2 ♘a5 19.♘d2 ♞c8=)
 14...♘d7 15.♙a4 ♞fd8 16.♙e3±.



This position is still very complex.

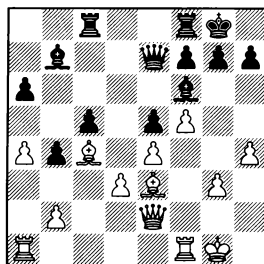
13.g3! ♘ge5 14.♘fxe5 ♘xe5
 15.♘xe5 ♜xe5 16.e4 ♞c8 17.♙c4
 ♙e7



18.f4!

An excellent positional decision! White seizes the initiative on the kingside. Black's problem is that without knights he lacks any counterplay.

18...♜c7 19.♞f1 ♙f6 20.f5 e5
 21.♙e3 ♜e7 22.h4 0-0

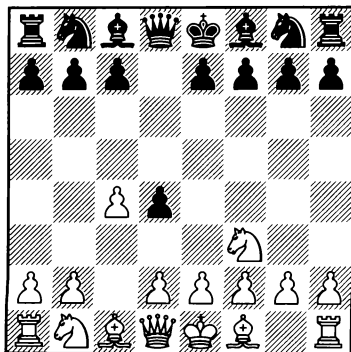


Black is totally helpless. The final stage of the game does not need comments.

23.♞f2 ♘h8 24.♞af1 ♞fd8 25.♞g2
 ♞d4 26.♙xd4 exd4 27.♜h5 ♞f8
 28.g4 g6 29.♜h6 g5 30.hxg5 1-0

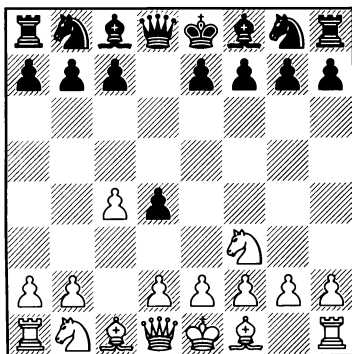
Reversed Benoni

1.♘f3 d5 2.♙c4 d4



Main Ideas

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 d4



According to my database, this move is 6 times less popular than 2...c6 or 2...e6, but in my opinion it is the most unpleasant retort to 2.c4. I have spent many months on analysis, only to confirm my conviction that White should hardly be better in a position where the opponent has a space advantage. When I ran out of fresh ideas I even began asking for help other highly respectful Chess Stars authors, but they also thought that Black should be OK here.

Many authors have spent plenty of ink to describe the multitude of plans White has in his possession.

The truth is somewhat different. The variety of plans White has tried is due to the fact that he has not any clear path to an edge.

Of course, that would not make me write off the whole system so easily. Most of the chess giants have played it successfully (recently Kramnik has crushed Topalov, for example). However, White should abandon the deceptive idea that he could choose some standard Reversed Benoni set-up with g3, ♗g2, ♖a3, ♖c2 and outplay the opponent. Practice has proved that such slow plans gradually lead White to a cramped position. Let us never forget that Black has a space advantage and once he has consolidated, his game may turn to be preferable.

White has an extra tempo and he should use it to destroy the enemy centre at any cost.

And make it fast!

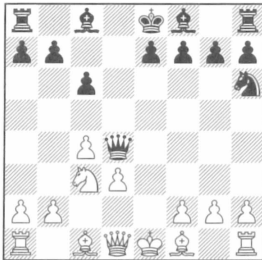
Lately White has been living up to that understanding so the analytical focus has been shifting towards extremely sharp gambit lines. They are still nearly unexplored, but White's future is there. I'm sure we'll be witnessing more top level games in variations like 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5 5.c5 a5 or even 3.e3 ♖c6 4.b4?!

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

In the next pages I will acquaint you with the course of my research. I will spare you many well trodden paths which I think to be irrelevant for contemporary theory. I will pay attention only to the critical variations according to my analysis.

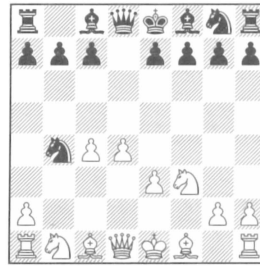
First of all, I rejected the popular plan 3.g3 ♘c6! 4.♙g2 e5 5.0-0 ♘f6 6.d3 in view of 6...a5! or even 6...♙d6!?, with comfortable development. The other old line:

3.e3 ♘c6! 4.exd4 ♘xd4 5.♘xd4 ♙xd4 6.d3 also seems without prospects. For instance: 6...c6! (A modern approach. Black restricts White's knight and plans to retreat to d6, followed by long castling.) 7.♙c3 ♘h6!



Black plays next ...♘f5, ...e5, with active pieces. This has been topical lately so I consider it in detail. According to my analysis, Black is holding in the complications after 8.♙e2 ♘f5 9.0-0 e5 10.g4 ♘h4 11.♙e3 ♙d6, but a future game might introduce some new idea for White.

On the fourth move, however, White has the enterprising pawn sac 4.b4?! dxe3 5.fxe3 ♘xb4 6.d4:



This is practically a blank spot in the theory. There are quite a few games, but most of them are absolutely irrelevant and full of mistakes. That is not without reason, though. The position is very unbalanced and it hides many traps. I have developed brand new attacking plans which should be a nasty surprise to your opponents.

Perhaps the best risk/reward ratio offers the variation:

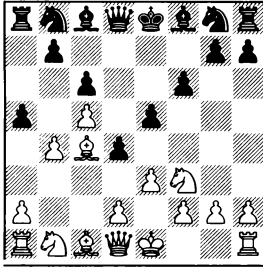
3.b4 f6! (3...c5?! 4.e3 f6 5.bxc5 e5 6.exd4 exd4 7.d3± ♘c6 8.♙e2 and 3...g6?! 4.g3 ♙g7 5.d3 e5 6.♙g2 ♘e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.a4!? a5 9.b5 c5 8.♙a2! ♙a7 11.e3 dxe3 12.fxe3± should not be of great concern to White.) **4.e3 e5 5.c5 a5**



6.♙b5+!?

6.♖xe5 is a forced draw while 6.♙c4, as played by Kramnik, is not entirely sound.

6...c6 7.♙c4

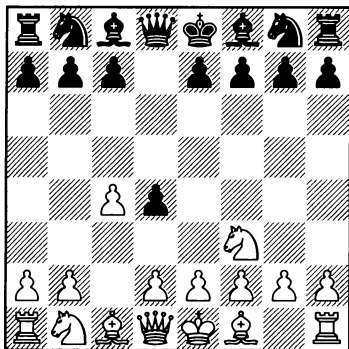


I have found only three examples in my database. White is threatening with 8.♖xe5 which will be possible after 7...axb4. Other possibilities are 7...♙g4 and the all hot 7...♖e7 which was introduced in **Game 3 Berczes-Prusikin**, Bundes-

liga 2012. I analyse this important novelty in detail in the “Complete Games” chapter. Look also at line B3 in the “Step by Step” chapter. I think that it is useless to give here some “main” line since the next 20 moves require an utmost precision and should be learned by heart. My general opinion is that White has full compensation for the material deficit and the main question is would Black survive or not. It is extremely difficult to find over the board all the tactical subtleties that often hold together his defence. Even if the opponent spent hours on home preparation, he might fall victim of misleading “suggestions” by the chess engines. The future will shed more light on this tricky variation, but its current state is absolutely playable, with fair practical chances for White.

Step by Step

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 d4



A. 3.g3; B. 3.e3; C. 3.b4.

The SOS variation 3.c5?! has no bite, for instance: 3...♗c6 4.♜a4 ♘d7 5.♗xd4 e5 6.♗xc6 ♙xc6 7.♜c2 ♜d4 8.e3 ♜xc5 9.♗c3 ♗f6 10.a3 a6 11.b4 ♜d6=, B.Lalic-Dubreuil, Cap-pelle la Grande 2011.

A. 3.g3 ♗c6!

3...c5 or 3...g6 offer White more chances to develop an initiative in the reversed Modern Benoni.

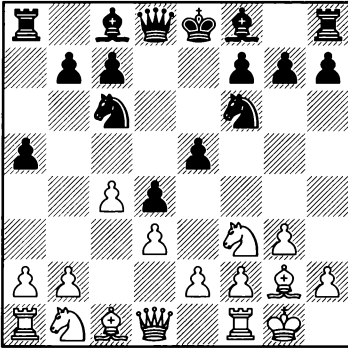
4.♙g2 e5 5.0-0 ♗f6 6.d3 a5!

This is more accurate than 6...♙e7 7.b4 ♗xb4 (or 7...♙b4 8.♗xe5

♗xe5 9.♜a4+ ♗c6 10.♙xc6+ bxc6 11.♜xb4±) 8.♗xe5 0-0. With a pawn majority in the centre, White has more possibilities to fight for the edge than in the main line. The recent game Kramnik-Topalov, 20th Amber Blindfold Monaco 14.03.2011, went 9.♗d2 ♙d6 10.a3 ♗a6 11.f4! c6 12.♞b1 ♜e7 13.♗df3 ♗g4 14.♗xd4 ♗xe5 15.fxe5 ♙xe5 16.e3 and White's central pawns keep Black at bay, leaving him without a clear plan.

6...♙d6!? discourages 7.b4 by defending e5. After 7.e3 (7.♙g5 h6 8.♙xf6 ♜xf6 9.♗bd2 0-0 10.♗e4 ♜d8 11.♗xd6 ♜xd6 12.♜a4 ♙d7 13.♜a3 ♜xa3 is probably slightly better for Black, Ni Hua-Edouard, Biel 2011) 7...0-0 8.exd4, the game is balanced, for instance: 8...♗xd4 9.♗xd4 exd4 10.♗d2 ♞b8 11.♞e1 ♙g4 12.♗f3 draw, Ni Hua-Ponomarev, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

After the text, White should undermine the opponet's centre because slowplay with 7.♗a3 ♙c5 would allow Black to consolidate and keep his space advantage: 8.♗d2 0-0 9.♗c2 ♙f5 10.b3 ♞e8 11.♙b2 e4, Agrest-Salgado Lopez, Ourense 2009.



7.e3 dxe3!

Straightforward and simple.
7...e7 8.exd4 exd4 9.dxa3 0-0
10.dxb5± gives White active pieces.

8.xe3 e7 9.d4

9.d3 0-0 does not change much the character of the position. Sooner or later White will have to push d4.

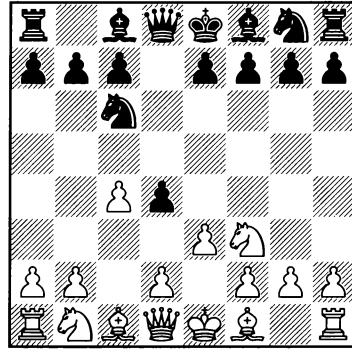
9...exd4 10.dxd4 dxd4 11.xd4

11.xd4 0-0 12.d3 c6 is totally equal. Black's only weakness at a5 is easy to defend.

11...0-0 12.d3 c6 13.c5 g4 14.a4 d7=.

B. 3.e3 d6!

3...c5 4.b4 f6 is considered in line C.

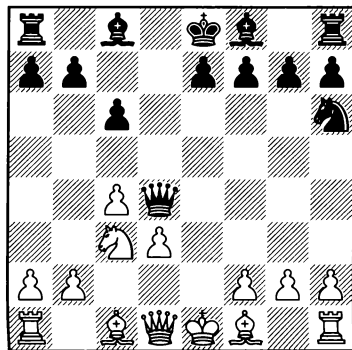


Now the main line is B1. 4.exd4, but B2. 4.b4?! may pose more problems to Black. The gambit could be quite dangerous.

B1. 4.exd4 dxd4 5.dxd4 xd4 6.d3 c6!

A modern approach. Black restricts White's knight and plans to retreat the queen to d6 and castle long.

7.d3 d6!



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

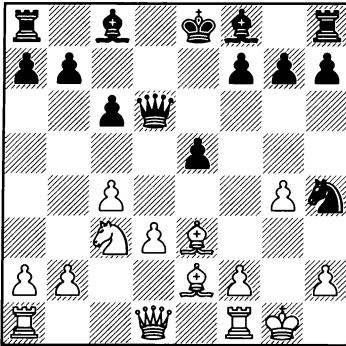
This manoeuvre is a potential killer of White's set-up. The knight will control from f5 all the important dark squares in the centre and will be discouraging a bishop's sortie on e3. Evidently, White cannot stand it for long so he should contemplate g2-g4. It is still impossible, though.

8.h3 looks like a reasonable preparation, but practice has seen Black at least equalising after 8...♟f5 9.g4 ♖e5+!, for example: 10.♟e4 ♟d4 11.f4 ♗a5+ 12.♙d2 ♗d8, Naiditsch-Bauer, 2011 Mulhouse 2011. That's why I prefer a quick development:

8.♙e2 ♟f5 9.0-0

9.g4 ♟h4 10.♖g1 ♗d6 is too risky.

9...e5 10.g4 ♟h4 11.♙e3 ♗d6



A critical position. I think that White should not be better. He is ahead in development, but concrete analysis shows that he cannot reap dividends from that. At the same

time, his castling position is compromised and may tell in future.

12.♟e4

12.d4 would have been fine if Black took on d4 (12...exd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♙xd4±), but the flank attack 12...h5! pinpoints the sore point of White's set-up – the shaky position of his king. I investigated in my analysis 13.gxh5, but Black has sufficient counterplay. Instead, the game D.Gurevich-W.Watson, Saint John 1988, continued 13.f3 ♙d7 14.d5 ♗g6. Here 15.g5 would have kept the kingside closed, but most players would prefer to be Black anyway.

12...♗c7 13.f4 ♙e7 14.f5

White would be better if he could fix the c6-pawn while maintaining his kingside stable with f5 and h3. However, he lacks a tempo. It is tempting to put in 14.c5, but apart from 14...f5!?, Black also has 14...h5 15.d4 exd4 16.♙xd4 ♙xg4 17.♙xg4 hxg4 when the forced sequence 18.♟d6+ ♙xd6 19.cxd6 ♗d7 20.♙xg7 0-0-0 21.♙xh8 ♖xh8 22.♗d4 ♖h6 23.♗g7 ♗xd6 24.♗fd1 ♟f3+ 25.♟f1 ♟d2+ 26.♗xd2 ♗xd2 27.♗xh6 leads to a draw.

14...h5 15.h3

The correspondence game Bo-ger-Persson, ICCF 2007, went 15.c5 hxg4 16.♙xg4 ♗d7 17.h3, with a tense fight. However, computers suggest 15...g6!?∞.

15...hgx4 16.hxg4 c5

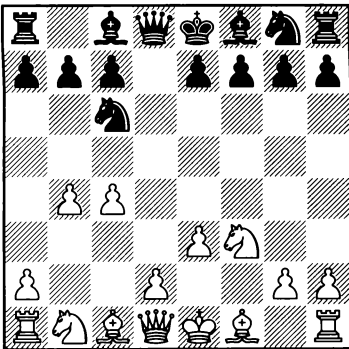
Apparently, Black is holding here, despite the somewhat hanging state of the h4-knight. Here are some illustrative variations:

17.♖e1 ♘d7 18.♙f2 ♙c6 19.f6 ♙xe4 20.fxg7 ♖g8 21.dxe4 ♜g6∞;

17.♖f2 ♘d7 18.♖h2 ♙c6 19.♖e1 ♙xe4 20.dxe4 ♖c6 21.♞d1 ♖xe4 22.♜f2 g6 23.♖h1 gxf5! (23...♖xh1 24.♞dxh1 g5 25.♙f3∞) 24.♖xe4 fxe4 25.g5 f6 26.gxf6 ♙xf6 27.♙g4=.

B2. 4.b4?! (risky!) 4...dxe3

4...♙g4 gives White the initiative without any material consolation after 5.b5 ♜e5 6.♙b2 c5 7.bxc6 ♙xf3 8.gxf3 ♜xc6 9.f4.

5.fxe3

This gambit is quite tricky. It faces Black with some difficult choices. Another point in its favour is that it is completely unexplored.

5...♜xb4

5...e5!? has never been played, but it may be a decent alternative. The position after 6.b5 ♜b4 7.♜c3 ♙f5 8.e4 ♙g4 is strategically unbalanced and unclear.

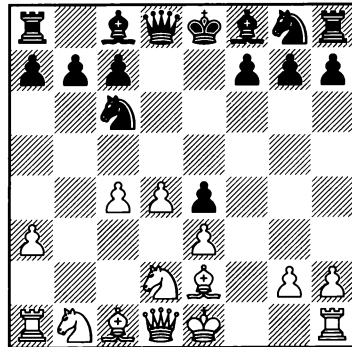
6.d4

6.♖a4+ ♜c6 7.d4 has no bite: 7...♙d7 8.♖b3 e5 9.d5 ♜b4, Kozul-A.Petrosian, Slovenia 1994.

I have analysed after 6.d4 the aggressive B21. 6...e5, and the solid B22. 6...c5!? and B23. 6...e6.

B21. 6...e5 7.a3 ♜c6

The first game in this variation, Takacs-Rubinstein, Merano 1924, saw 7...e4!? 8.♜fd2 ♜d3+ 9.♙xd3=. White should be more aggressive: 8.♜e5! ♜c6 9.♖a4 ♙d6 10.♜xc6 ♖h4+ 11.g3 ♙xg3+ 12.hxg3 ♖xh1 13.♖b5! ♜f6 14.♜e5+ c6 15.♜xc6 ♙d7 16.♖e5+ ♙e6 17.♖d6! bxc6 18.♖xc6+ ♜e7 19.a4 ♖hb8 20.♙a3+ ♜d8 21.♜c3 ♙d7 22.♖d6, with a strong attack.

8.♙e2 e4 9.♜fd2

9...f5

The e4-pawn is important. After 9...♞g5 10.♟xe4 ♞xg2 11.♙f3 ♞g6 [11...♞h3 12.♟bc3 ♞h4+ 13.♟g3 (13.♟f2 ♙d7 14.♞c2 ♟f6) 13...♙d6 14.♙a2 ♟f6 15.0-0 ♙h3 16.♙g2 ♙d7 17.e4 ♟g4 18.♙f3 0-0 19.e5 ♙e7 20.♟d5!] 12.♟bc3 ♙e7 13.♟d5 ♙h4+ 14.♟d2 ♙d8 15.♙b2 ♟ge7 16.♟f4 White obtained a strong initiative in Tymrakiewicz-Allicock, Sunningdale 2007.

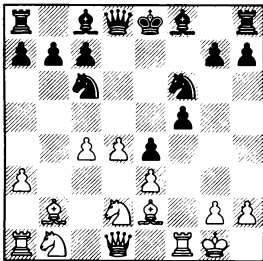
10.♙b2!

Of course we should not let the black knight to e5 as in Omearat-Raetsky, Abu Dhabi 2010: 10.d5 ♟e5 11.♙b2 ♞h4+ 12.g3 ♞e7 13.♟c3 ♟f6.

10...♞g5

This has been played in the stem game Eklund-Brynell, Sweden 2009. The queen's sortie is undoubtedly the most challenging retort to White's gambit, and the engines love it. Still, I suppose that the restrained development:

10...♟f6!? is more unpleasant. 11.0-0



White should be careful to avoid a blockade of his central pawn pair. It is much better to sac another pawn with c4-c5, d4-d5-d6, than to allow a blockade, as in the variation 11.d5?! ♟b8 (11...♟a5!?) 12.♟b3 ♟bd7 13.0-0 ♟c5 14.♙d4 b6. We should move one of our pawns only if we are able to secure the march of its neighbour.

11...♙d6

First line of the engines. Black creates threats like 12...h5, 13...♙xh2+!. At the same time, he discourages ideas with g2-g4.

Alternatives are :

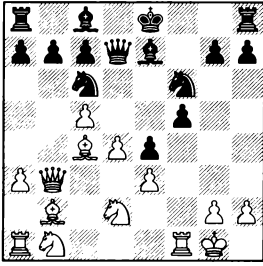
a) 11...b6. By preventing c4-c5, Black threatens to put his bishop to d6 in full comfort. We have no choice but force play by 12.d5! ♟b8 (12...♟a5 13.♟c3 ♙e7 14.♟xe4 fxe4 15.♟xe4 0-0 16.d6 cxd6 17.♟xf6+ ♙xf6 18.♞d5+) 13.♙h5+ g6 14.♟xe4, with an attack.

b) 11...♙e7!?. The same restrained tactic started with 10...♟f6. We should do something quickly before Black has castled: 12.g4!? fxg4 13.♟c3 0-0 14.♟cxe4. The game is strategically unbalanced and unclear. Play might continue 14...♞e8 15.d5 ♟b8 16.♙d4 b6 17.♞e1 ♟a6 18.♞g3.

12.c5! ♙e7 13.♞b3 ♞d5

Dragging the bishop to c4 under the knight fork. 13...♞d7 14.♟c3 ♟a5 15.♞a2 is awkward to Black.

14.♙c4 ♞d7

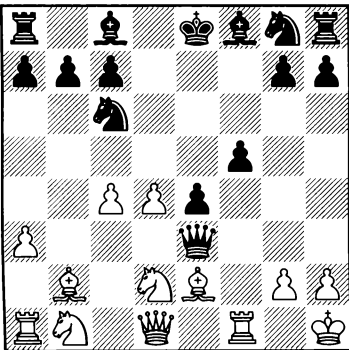


15.♙c3!

I have also analysed 15.♞a2 ♘g4 16.♙f7+ ♘d8 17.♞e1 ♙h4 18.g3 ♙g5 19.♘f1 ♞f8 20.♙c4 (20.♙h5 ♘f6 21.♙e2 ♘d5+; 20.♙b3 ♘a5 21.h3 ♘f6 22.d5 ♞f7) 20...♘a5 21.h3 ♘f6 22.d5 ♞f7 23.♘bd2 ♘d7 24.d6 ♘xc4 25.dxc7+ ♘xc7 26.♘xc4 ♙e7 27.♞ac1 ♙xc5 where the pin along the a2-g8 diagonal is clogging White's pieces. The text is slower, but White keeps the extremely important light-squared bishop. His superiority in the centre promises him full compensation for the pawn:

15...♘d8 16.a4 ♘g4 17.♞e1 ♙g5 18.♘f1 ♘e6 19.♘a3 a6 20.♞ad1 ♙h4 21.♞e2 0-0 22.♙b4 ♞d8 23.d5 ♘h8 24.♞ed2.

11.0-0 ♞xc3+ 12.♙h1



A spectacular position. For only a couple of pawns White has achieved a big advantage in development and a mobile pawn centre. My analysis suggests that the position is very dangerous for Black, despite the "opinion" of the engines:

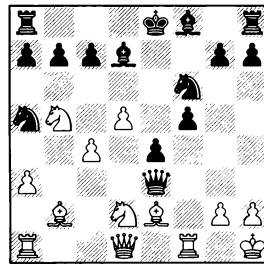
12...♘f6

12...♘d4? fails to 13.♙h5+ g6 14.♘xe4!.

13.d5 ♘e7

13...♘d4 is already possible, but White retains the attack after 14.♘xe4! ♘xe2 15.♘xf6+ gxf6 16.♞e1 ♘f7 17.♞xe2 ♞f4 18.♘d2 ♙d6 19.♘f3.

13...♘a5 is more complicated. We continue with 14.♘c3 ♙d7 (14... ♙d6 15.♘cxe4!!+- fxe4 16.♙h5+ ♘e7 17.♞e1 ♞d3 18.c5 ♙xc5 19.♙xf6+ gxf6 20.♞c1 ♙e3 21.♞xc7+ ♙d7 22.♘xe4 ♞xe4 23.d6+ ♘e6 24.♙f3 ♞f4 25.♞ad1→) 15.♘b5!



15...0-0-0

15...♙xb5 does not solve Black's problems in view of 16.♙xf6 gxf6 17.♙h5+ ♘d8 18.cxb5 ♞g5 19.g4!! fxg4 20.♙xg4 ♞g8 21.h3. Black's

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

king will hardly find a safe haven. The opposite coloured bishops hinder his defence. One of the many entertaining variations is 21...h5 22.♟f5 ♖g6 23.♟xh5 e3 24.♟f3 ♜c4 25.d6! ♜xd6 26.♟d5 and Black is helpless.

16.♟d4 ♖h6 17.♟b3! ♟xb5 18.♟xa5.



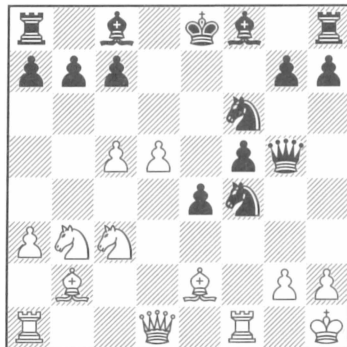
White's attack is strong. Illustrative variations are: 18...♟e8 19.♟b3 b6 20.c5; 18...♟d7 19.♟xb7! ♜xb7 20.♟b3+ ♜c8 21.♟ab1; 18...♟a6 19.♟b1 ♜xd5!? (or 19...♟d6 20.♟xa7; 19...♟d6 20.h3 ♜d7 21.c5 ♟xe2 22.c6! b6 23.♟xe2 ♜b8 24.♟xf5±; 19...♟e7 20.♟xf5) 20.cxd5 ♟xd5 21.♟xa6 ♟xa6 22.♟xb7 ♟c4 23.♟xa7!! ♟xd1 24.♟fxd1±.

14.♟b3 ♜g6 15.c5 ♟g5 16.♟c3!

In the stem game Eklund-Brynell, Sweden 2009, White won after 16.♟b5+ ♜d8 17.♟a2 f4? 18.♟1d2 ♟f5 19.♟a5 ♟b8 20.c6 b6 21.♟b7+ ♜c8 22.♟c4 ♟g4 23.♟xf6 gxf6 24.d6 cxd6 25.♟cxd6+ ♜c7 26.♟b3 ♟e5 27.♟d2 ♟e6 28.♟a4 a5 29.♟xa5 ♟xd6 30.♟c4 ♟xc4 31.♟a7+ 1-0, but 17...a6! 18.♟c4 ♜g4 19.♟d4 ♟h6

would have been gloom for him. I prefer to complete development before targeting something in the black camp.

16...♟f4 (16...a6 17.♟d4 ♟d7 18.♟ad1)



17.♟xf4!

17.♟b5+ c6 18.g3 cxb5 19.♟xf4 ♟h5 is unclear.

17...♟xf4 18.♟b5 e3 19.♟xf6 gxf6 20.d6 cxd6 21.cxd6 ♟xd6 22.♟xd6+ ♜e7 23.♟c4 ♟e6 24.♟e1 a5 25.♟bxa5 ♜f7 26.♟b4

White's two pieces are stronger than the rook, because Black's king has no shelter.

B22. 6...c5!? 7.a3 ♟a6

This variation is underestimated, probably because of the passive position of Black's knight at a6. However, I like Black's position. It is quite solid so the game cannot be decided in the opening. White will

have to regroup his forces in order to prepare for a further advance in the centre. I tried to investigate in deep the possibilities of both sides. Black seems to hold, but only with active counterplay by ...e6.

8.d5

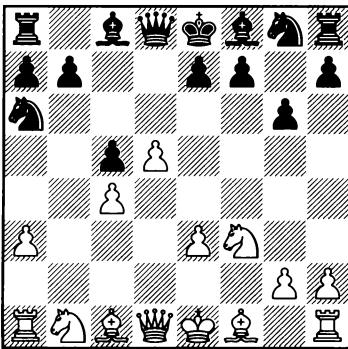
There is nothing to gain by maintaining the tension in the centre. Black only gets additional possibilities as 8.♔d3 g6 9.♖bd2 cxd4 10.exd4 ♖c5!.

Black's general plan is ...g6, ...♖h6-f5/g4, for instance:

8.♞a4+ ♔d7 9.♞b3 ♜b8 10.d5 g6 11.♖c3 ♔g7 12.♞b1 ♖h6 13.♔d3 0-0 14.0-0∞;

8.♖c3 g6 9.d5 ♔g7 10.♔d2 ♖f6 11.♔d3 0-0 12.0-0 ♖g4.

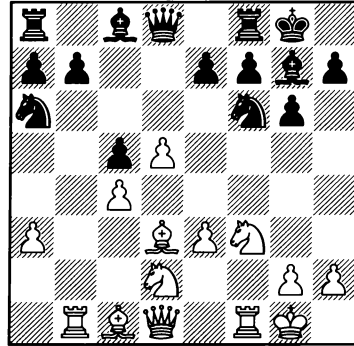
8...g6



Now White should decide where to put the a1-rook. At first sight, b1 looks the better place. The rook hampers the break ...b7-b5 and restricts the c8-bishop. On the other hand, from a2 it can arrive faster at f2 or e2. White has compensation

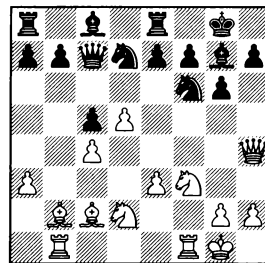
in both variations, but only practice can tell which is the best option.

a) 9.♖bd2 (9.♔b2 ♖f6) 9...♔g7
10.♞b1 ♖f6 11.♔d3 0-0 12.0-0



The easy part has ended. Now Black must define his plan. He can either stay passive, manoeuvring to improve his pieces, or attack the centre. The first approach offers White a lasting initiative on the kingside:

12...♖b8 13.♞e1 ♖bd7 14.♞h4 ♞c7 15.♔b2 ♜e8 (15...h6 will be immediately attacked by 16.g4! g5 17.♖xg5 ♖e5 18.♞g3) 16.♔c2!



The bishop is heading for a more active position at a4. This is essential in variations like 16...b6

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

17.e4 ♘h5 18.♙xg7 ♜xg7 19.♙a4 e5 20.dxe6 ♞xe6 21.♘g5 ♘df6 22.♘xe6+ ♙xe6 23.♘f3±.

16...♞a5 denies ♙a4, but leaves the black king without support. After 17.e4 e5 18.dxe6 ♞xe6 19.♞be1, White's attack is strong.

The most reasonable answer seems to be:

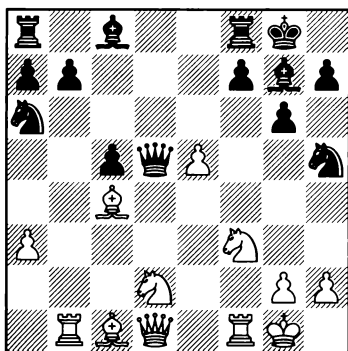
16...h6, to cover the g5 square and make room on h7 for the f6-knight. White leads the attack with 17.g4! ♘h7 (17...g5 18.♘xg5 hxg5 19.♞xg5→) 18.♘e4 ♙xb2 19.♞xb2 ♘df6 20.♞xh6 ♘xg4 21.♞h4 f5 22.♘f2→.

Obviously, Black needs counter-play in the centre:

12...e6! 13.e4 ♘h5

13...b6 14.e5 ♘xd5 (14...♘g4 15.♞e2) 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♞e1 ♙b7 17.♘f1 inverts the roles when Black has to prove that his 3 pawns balance the opponent's extra piece.

14.e5 (14.♞e1 b6!?) 14...exd5 15.cxd5 ♞xd5 16.♙c4



16...♞c6

Black has only moves here. The knight on a6 might easily become "a collateral damage" of the attack on f7. 16...♞d8 17.♞e2 ♘c7 saves it, but after 18.♘e4♞ White is dominating on the dark squares.

17.♘g5 ♙e6 18.♞b3♞

Perhaps White has nothing more than a draw after 18...♙xe5 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.♞e1 ♘f4 (20...♙d4+ 21.♙h1 ♘g7 22.♞xb7) 21.♞xb7 ♘h3+ 22.♙h1 ♘f2+ 23.♙g1=.

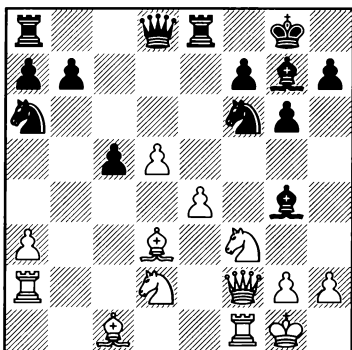
b) 9.♙d3 ♙g7 10.♙a2 ♘f6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♞e1

Shifting the queen to the kingside. 12.e4 b5 (12...♙g4 13.♘bd2) 13.♞e1∞ also needs analysis. After the text, the typical 12...e6 13.e4 ♞e8 14.♞h4 exd5 15.exd5 ♘h5 16.♞e2 ♙d7 17.♞xe8+ ♙xe8 18.♞f2 offers White compensation. Computers propose:

12...♙g4!? 13.♘bd2 e6 14.e4 exd5

Or 14...♞a5 15.h3 ♙xf3 16.♘xf3 ♞xe1 17.♞xe1 ♘d7 18.e5♞. The bishop pair and the overwhelming advantage in the centre outweigh Black's extra pawn.

15.cxd5 ♞e8 16.♞f2



This position is double-edged. White has excellent compensation for the pawn, for example:

16...c4 17.♙xc4 ♖xe4 18.♜xe4 ♜xe4 19.♜d2! ♙d4 20.♜xe4 ♙xf2+ 21.♜axf2 ♙f5 22.d6! (22. ♙b2 ♜c8 23.♜f6+ ♔f8 24.♜xh7+ ♔g8 25.♜f6+ is a draw) 22...♜c5 23.♜xc5;

16...♙d7 17.♙b2 ♜g4 18.♜g3 b5 19.♙xg7 ♜xg7 20.h3 ♜h6 21.♙b1 c4 22.♜d4 ♜b6 23.♜c3 ♜g8 24.a4 ♜c7 25.♜h1 a6 26.♜e3.

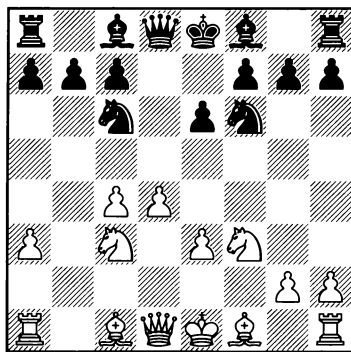
B23. 6...e6 7.♜c3

I believe that the pieces should be developed on their most active places. Accordingly, the knight should go to c3 (and not to d2), and the bishop to d3 (but not to e2).

7...♜f6 8.a3 ♜c6

Let us elaborate a little over this position. Obviously, White should advance his central pawns in order to repel the main defender of Black's king – the f6-knight. How-

ever, 9.e4 will be strongly met by 9...e5!, favourably returning the extra pawn. On the other hand, 9.♙e2, hoping for e4 on the next turn, is too passive. Black will complete development with 9...♙e7 10.0-0 0-0 leaving us wondering what to attack. In Fressinet-Istratescu, Le Port-Marly 2012, White chose:



9.♙d3. Then the mundane 9... ♙e7 is not so comfortable: 10.0-0 0-0 11.♜e2 ♜a5 12.♙b2 c5 13.♜ad1 cxd4 14.exd4 a6, Munoz Moreno-Mancebo Ibanez, Aragon 1997, when 15.d5! exd5 16.♜xd5 ♜xd5 17.cxd5 ♙d6 18.♜c2 h6 19.♜e5 would have given White a tangible initiative. However, Istratescu surprised his opponent with 9... g6! and it turned out that White could not find even a trace of an attack against the perfectly protected king: 10.0-0 ♙g7 11.♙b2 0-0 12.♜e2 b6 13.♜ad1 ♙b7 14.♜h1 ♜e7 15.e4 ♜ad8 16.d5 exd5 17.cxd5 ♜a5 18.♜fe1 when best would have been 18...♜fe8+. White's set-up simply does not work against g6. In my opinion, the fianchetto of the dark-

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

squared bishop should be attacked by h2-h4. Naturally, White should firstly carry on e3-e4-e5. Thus 9.♙e2 begins to look not so bad – it produces fine results in the event of 9...g6 10.e4 ♘g7 (10...e5 is a mistake now due to 11.dxe5 ♖g4 12.♗xd8+ ♜xd8 13.♙g5+ ♙e7 14.♙f4±) 11.e5 ♜d7 12.h4! 0-0 13.h5 ♜e7 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.♙h6→.

Unfortunately, after 9.♙e2, Black can opt for the other set-up – 9...♙e7!. I had to find a multipurpose move which would enable e3-e4, but should also be effective against 9...♙e7. Thus a novelty has been born:

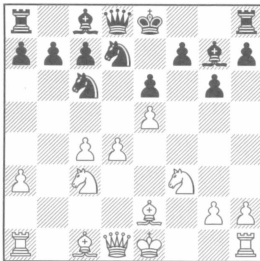
9.♗b1!

We prepare a very original rook lift ♖b1-b5-g5.

9...g6 weakens f6 thus allowing 10.e4! ♙g7

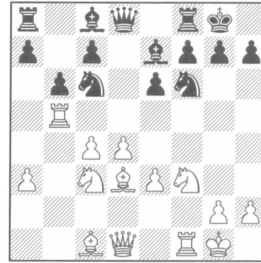
10...e5 is slightly better for White after 11.dxe5 ♗xd1+ 12.♜xd1 ♜g4 13.♜d5 ♖b8 14.♜e1 ♙g7 15.♜xc7+ ♜f8 16.♙e2± ♜gxe5 17.♙f4.

11.e5 ♜d7



12.h4! 0-0 (12...f6 13.h5 fxe5 14.♙g5↑) 13.h5→.

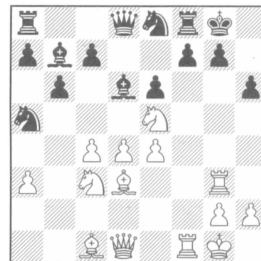
9...♙e7 10.♙d3 0-0 11.0-0 b6 12.♗b5!?



White suddenly brings the heavy artillery closer to the enemy king. The ensuing complications require practical tests, but it is clear that White has sufficient compensation for the pawn. Black's position is not enviable. Too many lines lead to a debacle. The engines suggest:

12...♙a6

It is risky to remove the knight from the centre with 12...♜a5 (hoping for ...c5) 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗g3 ♙d6 15.♜e5 ♙b7 16.e4 ♜e8:

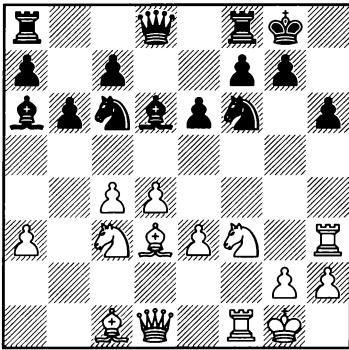


Our plan has triumphed. One last precise prophylactic move and Black should be unable to defend:

17.♜h1! ♙xe5 (17...f6 18.♗g4 fxe5 19.♗xe6+ ♜h8 20.♙xh6+→)

18.dxe5 ♖d4 19.♟b5 ♜xe5 20.♙f4
♜c5 21.♙xh6±.

13.♞g5 h6 14.♞g3 ♙d6 15.♞h3



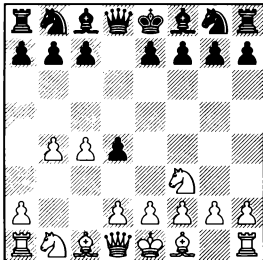
15...♙c8

15...♙b7 could be met the same way: 16.♙b1! ♜e8 (16...♟a5? 17.♜c2 ♟xc4 18.♟g5+-) 17.♜d3 ♟a5 18.e4 e5 19.♟d5→.

**16.♙c2! e5 17.♞h4 exd4
18.exd4 ♜e8 19.♟b5**

White is clearly better, for instance: 19...a6 20.♟xd6 ♜xd6 21.♜d3 b5 22.♙xh6.

C. 3.b4

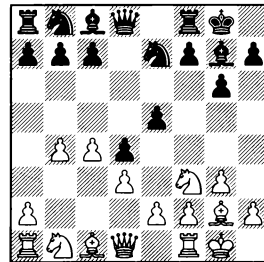


This is the most fashionable continuation. Its main lines are very sharp and require exact knowledge of forced variations.

3...f6!

Let us investigate the alternatives:

a) 3...g6?!. Black spends a tempo to develop his bishop to a passive square. White should enjoy some initiative after fianchettoing his own bishop and opening the centre with e3. Perhaps he should firstly stabilise his space advantage on the queenside: 4.g3 ♙g7 5.d3 e5 6.♙g2 ♟e7 7.0-0 0-0



8.a4!?

This improves on 8.♟bd2 a5! (Any delay of this break leads to a difficult position as in Miroshnichenko-Gasanov, Poltava 2008, which went 8...h6?! 9.♟b3 g5 10.a4 ♟g6 11.b5 ♟d7 12.a5 a6 13.♙a3 ♜e8 14.♟fd2 f5 15.♜c2 9.♟b3 g5 10.a4 ♟g6 11.b5 ♟d7 12.a5 a6 13.♙a3 ♜e8 14.♟fd2 f5 15.♜c2±.) 9.b5 c5 10.bxc6 ♟exc6 11.♙a3 ♟b4 12.♟e1 ♟8a6 13.♟c2 ♜e8 14.♙xb4 axb4 15.a3 bxa3 16.♞xa3 ♜b8=, Damljanovic-Sedlak, Subotica 2008.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

I think that White cannot aspire to the initiative without breaking in the centre with e2-e3.

8...a5 9.b5 c5 8.♞a2! ♞a7 11.e3 dxe3 12.fxe3

12.♟xe3 is also pleasant for White.

12...b6 13.♞c3 ♞d7 14.♞e1



14...f5

If Black waited passively with ...f6, White would put a knight on d5 and prepare g4, h4.

15.e4 f4 16.♞af2 (or 16.♟h3!? ♞d6 17.♟xc8 ♞xc8 18.♞g2±) 16... ♞d6 17.♞d5 g5. Here in Markus-Brkic, Banja Vrucica 2009, 18.d4!!± would have come out of the blue.

b) 3...a5

Black aims to define the pawn structure on the queenside. That would give him a free hand in the centre where he has a space advantage. He will try to put in both ...c5 and...e5. Practice does not shed enough light on this variation. I would suggest to open the centre quickly with:

4.♞a4+! ♟d7 (4...♞d7 or 4...c6 should be met by 5.♟b2) 5.b5 c5

6.e3 ♟f5 7.♟b2.



This position has not been tested yet.

The alternative on move 4 is risky:

4.b5 c5

After 4...f6?! 5.e3 e5 (or 5... dxe3 6.fxe3 e5 7.♞c3 ♟e6 8.d4 ♟b4 9.♟d2 ♞d7 10.a3) 6.exd4 exd4 (6...e4 7.♞e2 ♞e7 8.♞h4 f5 9.g3±) 7.♟d3 ♟c5 8.♞e2+ White is better.

5.e3



5...f6!

5...g6 is known to be in White's favour since the game Euwe-Alekhine, Amsterdam 1926, which went 6.exd4 ♟g7 7.d3 cxd4 (7... ♟xd4? 8.♞xd4 ♞xd4 9.♞c2!±, Euwe) 8.g3 ♞d7 9.♞bd2 ♞c5 10.♞b3 ♞b6 11.♞xc5 ♞xc5 12.♟g2 ♞h6 13.0-0 0-0 14.a4!±.

6.exd4

If White missed the moment for this capture, Black would have the option of recapturing by the e5-pawn.

After 6.g3 e5 7.d3 ♖d6 8.♗g2 ♖e7 9.0-0 0-0, it is unclear what to do with the queenside pieces.

6.♗d3 e5 7.♞c2 is dubious due to 7...♗e6!. Black completely ignores the hit on h7 and he is even planning to use the open h-file against the enemy king: 8.♗xh7 ♖e7 9.0-0 ♞c8. The good half of White's pieces are stuck useless on the queenside.

6...cxd4 7.♗d3!

After 7.♖h4 ♖h6 8.d3 ♖f7 9.g3 ♖d7 10.♗g2 ♖c5 11.0-0 g5 12.♖f3 ♗f5 Black is dominating in the centre, Grigoryan-Javakhishvili, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

7...e5 8.0-0 ♗d6! 9.♖h4 ♖h6!? 10.♞h5+ ♖f8, with unclear play.

c) 3...c5. Choosing the Closed Benko with colours reversed. Réti believed that White should answer 4.e3!. I consider the position after 4...f6 below, following the move order with 3...f6. Alternatives are:

4.bxc5 ♖c6 5.g3 e5 6.d3 ♗xc5 7.♗g2 ♖f6 (Black had a fine game even after 7...h6 8.0-0 ♖f6 9.♗a3 ♗xa3 10.♖xa3 0-0 11.♖d2 ♞e7 12.♖c2 ♗f5 13.♞b1, Kramnik-Tkachiev, blitz Moscow 2009, when the best move is 13...♞ad8 to protect d4 in the event of 14.f4 e4.) 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗a3 ♗xa3 10.♖xa3 ♗f5=;

4.♗b2. The bishop has no business here. It is better to trade it via a3. 4...f6 5.d3 e5 6.bxc5 ♗xc5 7.♖bd2 ♖c6 8.g3 ♖h6=.

4.e3 e5!

This variation is a tough nut to crack.

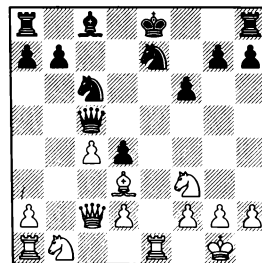
Note that 4...dxe3?! 5.fxe3 e5 6.c5 ♗e6 7.♗b5+ c6 8.♗a4 ♖h6 9.0-0 (9.♗b3 ♞d7 10.0-0 ♖a6) 9... ♗e7 10.♗b3 (10.d4!? ♖d7 11.♗b3) is much better for White, for example: 10...♞d7 11.♖c3 (or 11.d4 ♖a6 12.b5 cxb5 13.♖c3 ♗xb3 14.♞xb3 b4 15.♖e4) 11...♖a6 (12.a3 ♖c7 13.d4 0-0-0, draw, Korotylev-Kramnik, Moscow 2007) 12.d4!±.

4...c5 is seldom seen. Then 5.exd4 cxd4 6.c5 a5!? 7.♗c4 axb4 8.♞b3 e6 9.0-0 ♗xc5 has turned well for Black in Mastrovasilis-Dao Thien Hai, Khanty Mansiysk 2010.

White should opt for:

5.bxc5 e5 6.exd4 exd4

The most aggressive continuation here is 7.♗d3, but it can be counterattacked with 7...♗xc5 8.0-0 ♖e7 9.♞c2 ♖bc6 10.♗a3 ♞a5 11.♗xc5 ♞xc5 12.♞e1



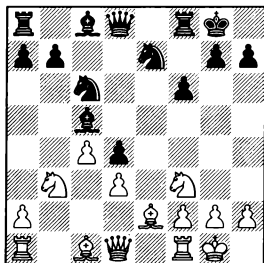
12... ♖b4!?. Now the endgame after 13. ♖a4+ ♔d7 14. ♖b3 ♖xd3 15. ♖xd3 0-0-0 16. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 17. ♖xd4 ♖c6 looks fine for Black.

So we choose the quiet:

7. d3± ♖c6 8. ♔e2

Or 8.g3!? ♔xc5 9. ♔g2 ♖e7+ 10. ♖f1 ♔e6 11. ♖bd2 ♔d8 12. ♖b1 ♖d7 13. ♖e2 ♖ge7 14. ♖e4 b6 15. ♖xc5 bxc5 16. ♔a3; 8. ♖fd2!?.

8... ♔xc5 9. 0-0 ♖ge7 10. ♖bd2 0-0 11. ♖b3



White has a very good version of the reversed Benko Declined. The e-file is open, the black pieces are unstable. For instance, after 11... ♔d6 12. ♖b1 b6 (12... ♔c7 13. ♖e1 b6 14. ♔b2 ♖f5 15. g3 a5 16. ♔f1 a4 17. ♖bd2±) 13. ♖bxd4 ♖xd4 14. ♖xd4 ♔xh2+ 15. ♖xh2 ♖xd4 16. ♔f3 ♖b8 17. ♖e1, White's bishop pair is ruling over the board. Instead, the game Azmaiparashvili-Stefansson, Moscow 1994 went 11... b6 12. ♖xc5 (or 12. ♖b1 a5 13. ♖e1 ♖d6 14. ♔f1 ♖g6 15. ♖xc5 bxc5 16. ♖d2 f5 17. g3 ♔d7 18. ♔g2±, Pirc-Kostic 1936) 12... bxc5 13. ♖d2±.

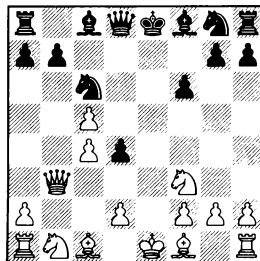
5.c5

Black's set-up is based on the fine point 5.exd4? e4! and White is already worse: 6. ♖e2 (6. ♖h4 was killed in the game Reshetkov-Bogdanovich, Odessa 2010, which went 6... ♖xd4 7. ♖c3 e3! 8. ♖h5+ g6 9. fxe3 ♖xc3 10. ♖xg6 ♖xa1 11. ♖xh8+ ♖d8 12. ♖d5+ ♖d7 13. ♖xg8 ♖xc1+ 14. ♖f2 c5! 15. bxc5 ♖xd2+ 16. ♔e2 ♖c7 17. ♖d1 ♖c2 18. ♖d5 ♖e5 19. h3 ♖f5+ 0-1.) 6... ♖e7 7. ♖g1 ♖c6 8. ♖e3 ♖xb4 9. ♖d1 ♖h6 10. ♖c3, Summerscale-Lane, Torquay 2009, when 10... ♔d7!, intending 11. ♖xe4 ♔a4+, would have assured Black of the edge.

The gambit idea 5.c5 is White's main hope for an advantage. It is coming into fashion and I would like to add my two cents in its development. Black will have to show brilliant defence in order to survive the attack.

a) 5. ♖b3 is more restrained, but it has no bite. Sakaev showed the best set-up for Black:

5...c5 6. bxc5 ♖c6 7. exd4 exd4 (7... ♖xd4 8. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 9. ♔b2 ♖e4+ 10. ♖e3 ♖xe3+ 11. fxe3 ♔xc5 12. ♔e2 ♖e7 13. d4 exd4 14. exd4 ♔b4+ 15. ♖c3±)



Now White's dark-squared bishop-op has not any prospects. After:

8.♔a3 f5! 9.♙e2 ♖f6 10.0-0 ♙e7
11.d3 ♜d7 12.♜bd2 ♜xc5 13.♞c2
(13.♙xc5 ♙xc5 14.♞b5 ♙b4 15.♞ab1
♙c3 16.♜e5 a6 17.♞a4 b5 18.♜xc6
bxa4 19.♜xd8 ♜xd8=) 13...0-0
14.♜b3 ♜e6 (14...b6 15.♜fd2 ♙b7
16.♙f3 ♜e6 17.♞ae1±) 15.♙xe7 ♞xe7
16.♞fe1 ♙d7 17.♙f1 ♞d6, the game is
balanced.

8.♙d3 ♙xc5 9.0-0 ♜ge7 10.♔a3
b6 was also equal in Tomashevsky-
Sakaev, Serpukhov 2007.

b) 5.a3 c5 6.exd4 cxd4 7.d3 a5 is
fine for Black.

c) 5.b5 is a computer move. Black
can chose between 5...c5 6.♙d3 ♙d6
7.♞c2 g6 8.exd4 exd4 9.0-0 ♜e7=
and 5...♜h6 6.♙b2 c5 7.♙d3 ♙f5
8.♙xf5 ♜xf5 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.♞c2 ♜d6
11.d3 0-0 12.♜bd2 ♜d7=.

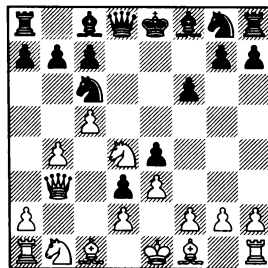
d) 5.♙b2 could be answered by
5...c5=, transposing to 4...c5. How-
ever, Black has no reason to decline
the pawn sac. After 5...dxe3! 6.fxe3
♙xb4 7.a3 (7.c5 ♜c6 8.♙c4 ♙xc5
9.0-0 ♜h6) 7...♙e7 8.♞c2 ♜h6
9.♙d3 g6 10.♜c3 c6 he has the bet-
ter game.

5...a5!

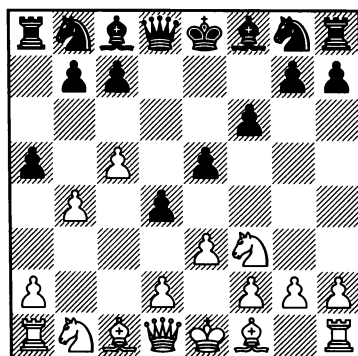
5...d3?! leaves Black overex-
tended: 6.♞b3! e4 7.♜d4 ♜c6

Or 7...a5 8.♜c3! f5 9.♜e6 ♞e7
10.♞a4+ ♜f7 11.♜xf8 ♜xf8 12.♔a3
♜f6 (After 12...axb4 13.♞xa8 ♜a6
14.c6 b6 15.g3! bxa3 16.♙g2 ♜f6
17.0-0 White breaks through with

f3.) 13.f3 ♜f7 14.fxe4 fxe4 15.b5 and
the e4-pawn should perish after g3,
♙g2.



8.♜xc6 bxc6 9.f3 f5 10.fxe4 fxe4
11.♜c3 ♜f6 12.g3 ♞e7 13.♙g2 ♙e6
14.♞a4 ♙d7 15.0-0±.



Main branches are:

C1. 6.♜xe5=; C2. ♙c4; C3. 6.♙b5+.

C1. 6.♜xe5, with a forced draw
after 6...fxe5 7.♞h5+ ♜d7 8.♞f5+
♜e8 9.♞h5+, Van Wely-Kramnik,
Nice 2008.

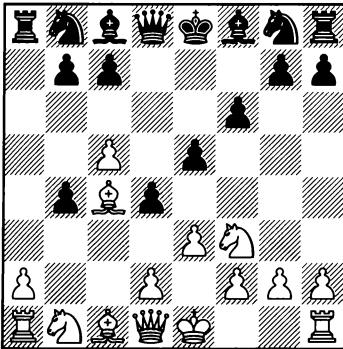
C2. 6.♙c4?! axb4!

This greedy move challenges
White to prove that his attack is

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

worth two pawns. The blitz game Kramnik-Aronian, Moscow 2009 saw the weaker 6...dxe3 7.fxe3 axb4 8.d4 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♘a5 10.♞xe5 ♞xc4 11.♞xc4 ♟e6 12.♞bd2 ♞e7 13.♟b2 ♞d5 14.♟f3 b5 15.cxb6 ♞xb6 16.♞xb6 cxb6 17.♟c6+ ♟d7 18.♟d5 ♟e7 19.♞c4 b5 20.♞e5+–.

6...♞h6?! is also dubious: 7.0-0 ♟e7 (7...d3 8.♟a4+ ♞c6 9.♞c3 ♟f5 10.b5 ♞b4 11.a3 ♞c2 12.♟b1 ♟xc5 13.♞h4 ♟g4 14.h3 ♟h5 15.♟d5 ♟f8 16.♟c4 and the d3-pawn should fall; 7...axb4 8.exd4 exd4 9.♟e1+ ♟e7 10.♟b2 ♞c6 11.a3 bxa3 12.♞xa3+–) 8.b5! ♟xc5 (8...♟g4 9.h3 ♟h5 10.♟a3) 9.♞xd4! ♟xd4 10.♟h5+, winning.



7.exd4

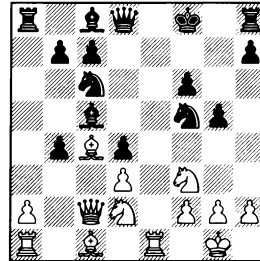
Alternatively, 7.♟b2 ♟xc5 and now:

a) 8.♞xe5 fxe5 9.♟h5+ ♞d7 10.exd4 is fighting for a draw with 10...♟xd4 11.♟xd4 exd4 12.♟d5+ ♟e7 13.♟f7+ ♞d6 14.♟d5+. Black could keep on playing by 10...♟e7!? (but not 10...♞f6 11.♟e2! ♟xd4 12.♟xd4 ♞c6 13.♟b2 ♟e8 14.0-0=).

b) 8.♞xd4 ♞e7 9.♞e6 ♟xe6 10.♟xe6 ♟d3 11.♟c1 ♟d6 12.♟c4 ♞bc6 13.0-0 ♞d8 14.♟g4 ♟d5 15.♟c2, Chuchelov-Schenk, Muelheim 2010, when 15...♟d6! would have put White's compensation to the test.

7...exd4 8.0-0

White admits the fact that he has no concrete threats and aims for a positional compensation. 8.♟b3 puts the ♟–♟ battery in the scope of Black's queen's knight: 8...♞h6 9.0-0 ♟xc5 10.d3 (10.♟e1+ ♟f8 11.a3 ♞c6 12.♟b2 ♞a5) 10...♞c6 11.♟e1+ ♟f8 12.♞bd2 (12.♟xh6 gxh6 13.♞bd2 ♟g7) 12...♞f5! 13.♟c2 g5



Apart from the two extra pawns, Black also has a space advantage.

8...♟xc5 9.d3

White must quickly create concrete threats to avoid ending up in positions like on the above diagram. However, in my analysis I have found more than enough defensive resources for Black.

a) 9.♟e1+ ♟f8 (9...♞e7!?) 10.d3 (10.♟c2 ♞e7 11.♟b3 b6! 12.d3 ♟b7

13. ♖bd2 ♗d5+ 10... ♖c6 11. ♖bd2 g6
12. ♖b3 ♗b6 13. h3 ♜g7+.

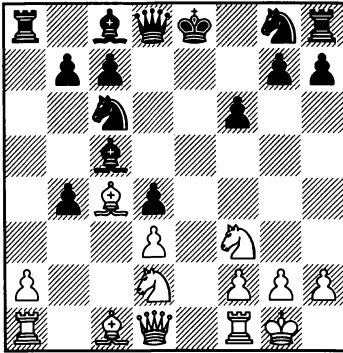
b) 9. ♖h4 g6 10. d3 ♖c6 11. ♗e1+
♜f8 12. ♖d2 ♖a5!.

c) 9. ♗c2 ♖e7 10. ♗b5+ c6 11. ♗xc5
cxb5 12. ♖xd4 ♗d5! 13. ♗xb4 ♖bc6
14. ♖xc6 ♖xc6+.

9... ♖c6!

9... ♖e7?! 10. ♖bd2 ♖d5 11. ♗e1+
♜f8 12. ♖h4 gives White an attack.

10. ♖bd2



10... ♖a5!

An essential move. 10... ♖ge7
11. ♖e4 ♗b6 12. ♗e1 ♖a5 allows the
tactical hit 13. ♖fg5! fxg5 14. ♗h5+
♜d7 15. ♗xg5 with an initiative, for
example: 15... ♖xc4 16. dxc4 ♗a5
17. c5 ♜c6 18. cxb6 ♜xb6 19. ♗h4
♗e8 20. ♖d2±.

11. ♖b3 ♖xc4 12. dxc4 b6
13. ♖fxd4 ♗xd4 14. ♖xd4 ♖e7
15. ♗h5+ g6 16. ♗f3 ♗xd4 17. ♗e3
♗a3 18. ♗xd4 ♗xf3 19. gxf3 ♜f7+.

White has landed in a murky
endgame.

C3. 6. ♗b5+!?

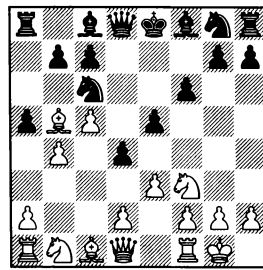
I like this move. In my opinion,
it leads to very tangled positions
which are difficult for both sides.
Sharp players should feel in their
element here.

6... c6!

The game Iturrizaga-Efimov,
Khanty-Mansiysk 2010, saw:

6... ♖c6?! 7. exd4? e4 8. d5 when
8... ♖ge7! 9. ♖c3 exf3 10. ♗xf3 axb4
11. dxc6 bxc6± would have been
a big improvement over 8... ♗d5.
However, the novelty:

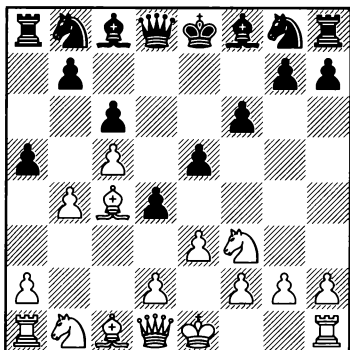
7. 0-0! gives White the upper
hand:



7... axb4 (7... ♖ge7 8. bxa5 ♗xa5
9. a4 ♗g4 10. d3±) 8. exd4 exd4 (8...
e4 9. ♗e1; 8... ♗d5 9. d3 exd4 10. ♗e1+
♖ge7 11. a3 b3 12. ♖bd2 ♗xc5
13. ♗xb3 ♗d7 14. ♗b2↑) 9. ♗e1+ ♗e7
(9... ♖ge7 10. ♗b3) 10. ♗b2 ♜f8 11. a3
bxa3 12. ♖xa3 ♗xc5 13. ♗c1, with ex-
cellent compensation.

7. ♗c4

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4



7...♞e7!?

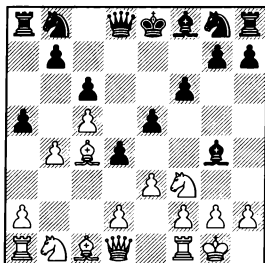
A very original move, aimed against ♟xe5. Alternatives are:

a) 7...♞g4

Played in Nikolaevsky-Savchenko, Kiev 1995 when 8.exd4? loses to 8...♞xf3 9.♟xf3 ♟xd4 10.♟b3 ♟xa1 11.0-0 ♟d4 12.♞xg8 ♞xg8 13.♟xg8 axb4-+.

8.♟b3 is also dubious: 8...♞h6□ 9.bxa5 [or 9.exd4 ♞xf3 10.gxf3 (10.♟xf3? ♟xd4 11.♟c3 ♟e4+ 12.♞f1 axb4 13.♟xb4 ♟d4 14.♞b2 ♞xc5) 10...♟xd4 11.♞b2 ♟f4 12.a3 ♞f5=] 9...♞xf3 (9...♞xc5 10.exd4 ♞xd4 11.♞xd4 ♟xd4 12.♞c3) 10.gxf3 ♟c7!!↑ 13.a4 ♞a7.

8.0-0!



8...e4

Or 8...axb4?! 9.exd4 ♞xf3 10.♟xf3 ♟xd4 11.♟b3; 8...♞h6 9.exd4 ♞xf3 10.♟xf3 ♟xd4 11.♟b3 axb4 12.♞b2 ♟xc5 13.d4=.

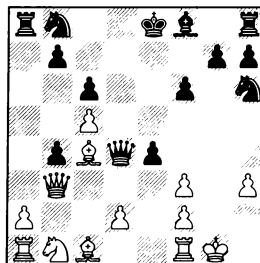
9.h3 ♞xf3

9...♞h5 10.g4 exf3 11.gxh5 axb4 12.♟xf3 ♞xc5 13.♞b2 dxe3 14.d4 favours White.

10.gxf3 axb4 11.♟b3

11.a3 ♞xc5 12.fxe4 ♟e7 13.♞b2 ♟xe4 14.axb4 ♞xa1 15.♞xa1 ♞d6 16.♞xd4 ♟g6+ 17.♞h1 ♟f5 18.♞g2 is a draw while 11.fxe4 ♞a6 (11...d3 12.a3) 12.♞b2 ♞xc5 is unclear, with full compensation for White.

11...♞h6 12.exd4 ♟xd4



Here 13.♟xb4 ♞xc5 14.♟xb7 ♟xc4 15.♟xa8 0-0 16.♟b7 ♞d4 17.♞c3 exf3 18.♟b3 gives White a slightly better endgame with an exchange for a pawn.

13.♞e1 leads to more tangled positions with full compensation for White since 13...♟xa1 14.♞b2 ♟xa2 15.♞xe4+ ♞e7 16.♞xe7+ ♞xe7 17.♟e3+ ♞d8 18.♞xa2 ♞xa2 19.♟d4+ ♞d7 20.♟xb4 ♞a7 21.♞a3↑ is dubious for Black.

b) 7...dxe3 8.fxe3 axb4

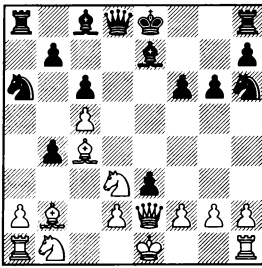
Peralta-Cafolla, Port Erin 2002, saw 8...g4 when simplest would have been 9.♖b3 ♖h6 10.bxa5 ♖xa5 (10...♖d7 11.d4) 11.♖c3. Another possible line is 8...e4 9.♖d4 axb4 when 10.a3 provides White with good compensation. For example, 10...♖h6 11.0-0 ♖g4 12.♖c2 ♖xc5 13.axb4 ♖xa1 14.bxc5.

9.d4. In this complex position White has compensation for the pawn.

c) 7...axb4 8.♖xe5 ♖h6!

Of course, 8...fxe5 9.♖h5+ ♖d7 10.♖f5+ ♖c7 11.♖xe5+ ♖d7 12.♖e6+ ♖e8 13.♖xc8+ is not inspiring for Black.

9.♖d3 ♖a6 10.♖h5+ g6 11.♖e2 dxe3 12.♖b2 ♖e7



13.♖xe3!

13.dxe3 ♖xc5 14.♖xc5 ♖xc5 15.♖d2 ♖e7 16.f3 is unclear.

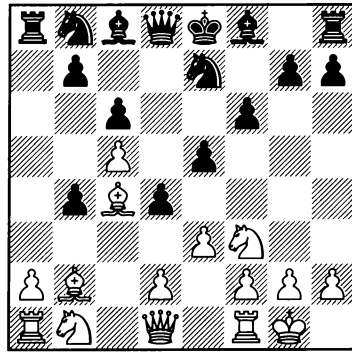
13...♖f5 14.♖e4 ♖g7 (14...♖f8 15.♖xa6 ♖xa6 16.0-0) 15.♖xa6 ♖xa6 16.♖xb4 ♖a4 17.a3 0-0 18.♖c2 ♖a5

19.d4 ♖e6 20.♖c4 ♖g7 21.0-0 ♖e8 22.♖e1±. A rare case where White has an extra pawn!

8.0-0!?

8.b5 is not in the spirit of the variation. Play would be unclear after 8...♖f5 9.♖c2 (9.e4 ♖h6 10.d3 ♖f7 11.bxc6 ♖xc6∞) 9...dxe3 10.fxe3 ♖xc5 11.♖d3 ♖e7.

8...axb4 9.♖b2

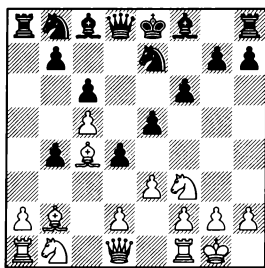


This position is the cutting edge of the theory in the 6.♖b5+! line. I expect new interesting developments very soon. The only definite thing I dare say is that White has full compensation for the pawn and his game is easier as he is the attacking side. It is possible, however, that with a perfect defence Black may be able to keep the balance. See detailed commentaries of **Game 3 Berczes-Prusikin**, Bundesliga 2012 in the "Complete Games" chapter.

Complete Games

3. Berczes-Prusikin Bundesliga, Baden 22.01.2012

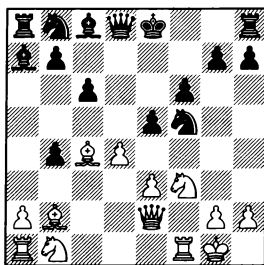
1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 f6 4.e3
e5 5.c5 a5 6.♙b5+ c6 7.♙c4 ♘e7
8.0-0 axb4 9.♙b2! (9.♙b3 ♘d5)



9...♘a6?

After this thematic move, Black's game is clearly worse. Critical is:

9...dxe3 10.fxe3 ♘f5 (10...♘d5 11.♘xe5) 11.♙e2 ♙xc5 12.d4 ♙a7! (In many variations Black's king escapes through b6.)



After long exhaustive analyses, I am still unsure what is White's best way to proceed in this position. He has full compensation for the pawns and his attack at many points looks decisive, but somehow the engines miraculously succeed to hold Black's position together with a series of only moves. There are too many branches, however, to reach a definite assessment. Let us see what future practice will show. Meanwhile, I think that over the board White's game is much easier. He seems to always have some kind of perpetual check in reserve, should Black display a perfect defence. I have analysed three main branches:

a) 13.a3?! e4

13...♙e7 14.axb4 ♙e6 15.♙xe6 ♙xe6 16.dxe5 fxe5 17.♙xa7 ♙xa7 18.e4 ♘h6 19.♘xe5 is unclear, but only Black can be better: 19...b6 20.♘d2 ♘f7 21.♘g4 0-0 (21...♘d7 22.♙xg7 ♙g8 23.♘f6+ ♘xf6 24.♙xf6=) 22.♘f6+=.

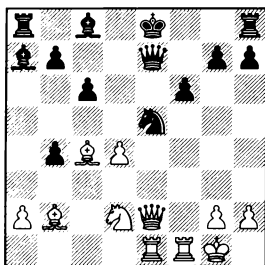
14.♘e1 ♘d6 15.♙b3 ♘a6 16.♘c2 ♙e7 17.♙h5+ g6 (17...♘f8 18.axb4=) 18.♙e2 ♙f8 19.♘xb4 ♘c7.

b) 13.dxe5 ♘d7!

13...♖xe3 loses to 14.exf6 gxf6
15.♔h1 ♜e7 16.♞e1 ♔d8 17.♜bd2
♔c7 18.♜f1 ♞e8 19.♜xe3 ♙xe3
20.♙c1+-.

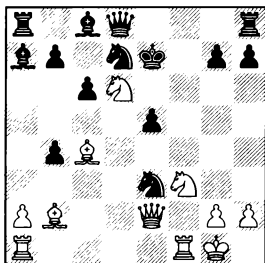
14.♜bd2 fxe5!

14...♜e7 15.♜d4 ♜xd4 16.exd4
♜xe5 17.♞a1 favours White:



17...♙g4 (or 17...♔d8 18.♔h1
♜g6 19.♜d1 ♜c7 20.d5 ♙d7 (20...
♙b8 21.g3) 21.♜e4 ♔c8 22.d6 ♜a5
23.♙xf6 gxf6 24.♜xf6±) 18.♜e4 ♜d7
19.♔h1 0-0-0 20.dxe5 f5 21.e6!, with
an initiative. Here is an example:
21...♜xd2 22.♜b1 ♞he8 23.e7 ♞d7
24.♙c1 ♜c3 25.♙e6 ♞xe7 26.♙xd7+
♞xd7 27.♞e8+ ♞d8 28.♞xd8+ ♔xd8
29.♙g5+↑ ♔c7 30.a3!? ♙e2 31.♙f4+
♔b6 32.♞e1 ♙d3 33.♜xb4+ ♜xb4
34.axb4 ♔b5 35.♞e7 ♙d4 36.♞xb7+
♔c4 37.♙d6±.

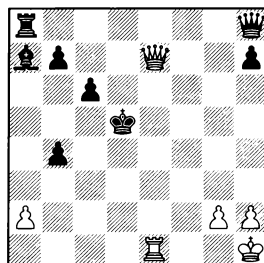
15.♜e4 ♜xe3 (15...♜e7 16.♜fg5)
16.♜d6+ ♔e7



An incredible position. Even
more incredible is that it may turn
to be equal with perfect defence
from Black!

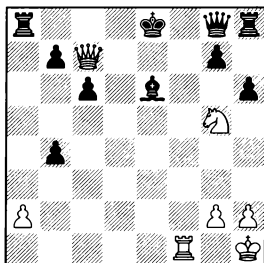
a1) 17.♜xc8+?! ♜xc8 18.♔h1 ♜c7
19.♜f2 ♔d8 20.♞fe1 ♜xc4 21.♜h4+
♔c8 22.♜xc4 b5 23.♜xb4 ♞e8 24.a4
♙c5 25.♜g4 ♞xa4 26.♞xa4 bxa4
27.♜xa4 ♜b7±.

a2) 17.♜xe5 ♜xe5 18.♙xe5
♜xc4+ 19.♔h1 ♜xd6 20.♞ae1 ♙e6
21.♙xg7 ♜g8 22.♞f6 ♔d8 23.♙xh8
♔c7 24.♞xe6 ♜xh8 25.♞xd6 ♔xd6
26.♜e7+ ♔d5.



Apparently, White has no more
than a perpetual here.

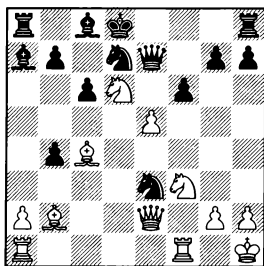
a3) 17.♜f7 ♜xc4+ 18.♔h1 ♜g8
19.♜3g5 (19.♜3xe5 ♜dxe5 20.♜xe5
♜e3 21.♞f7+ ♜xf7=) 19...♜xb2
20.♞ae1 ♙b8 21.♜xb2 h6 22.♜xe5
♜xe5 23.♞xe5+ ♙xe5 24.♜xe5+ ♙e6
25.♜c7+ ♔e8



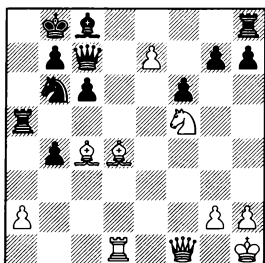
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

Again, a perpetual check is looming after 26.♞xb7 hxg5 or 26.♞e4.

b) 13.♞bd2 ♞e7 (13...♞d7 14.♞g5) 14.♞e4 ♞d7 15.dxe5 (15.♞b3 ♞d8 16.♞fg5 fxg5 17.♞xf5 exd4 18.♞xg5 d3 19.♞xd3 ♞xe3+ 20.♞xe3 ♞xe3+ 21.♞h1 ♞xg5 22.♞xg5 ♞e8 23.♞xg7 ♞e2=) 15...♞xe3 16.♞d6+ ♞d8 17.♞h1



17...♞c7 (17...♞xf1 18.♞f5 ♞f8 19.♞xf1 ♞c7 20.e6±) 18.♞d4 ♞xd4 19.♞xd4 ♞xf1 20.♞f5 ♞d8 21.e6 ♞b8 22.♞d1 ♞a5 23.♞xf1 (23.exd7 ♞xf5 24.dxc8♞+ is unclear because Black's rooks are too active.) 23...♞b6 24.e7 ♞c7



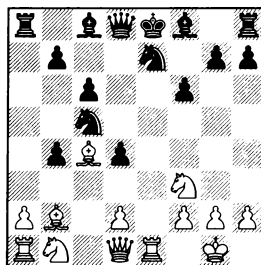
25.♞xg7 (After 25.♞xb6 ♞xb6 26.♞d6 ♞e5 27.♞f7 ♞xe7 28.♞xh8 the knight cannot join the other white forces.) 25...♞xe7 26.♞xb6

♞e5 27.♞f3 ♞xg7 28.♞b3 ♞g4 29.♞a4 ♞a5 30.♞xa5 b5 31.♞xb5 cxb5 32.♞xb5+ ♞b7 33.♞g1 ♞c8=.

10.exd4 exd4 11.♞e1

11.♞xd4 ♞xc5 12.♞h5+ ♞g6 13.♞e1+ ♞d7 14.a3↑ also retains the initiative.

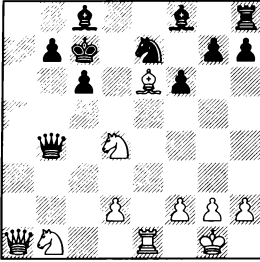
11...♞xc5



12.♞xd4

White has opened the centre without significant material losses. This is a sure sign that he is on top. 12.♞xd4 b5 13.♞xc5 bxc4 14.♞xb4 ♞f7 15.♞c3 ♞d5 16.♞xf8 ♞xc3 17.♞c1 ♞xf8 18.dxc3 would have been better for him, but the text keeps more tension. Now 12...♞a4 is insufficient due to 13.♞b3 ♞xb2 14.♞xb2 (14.♞f7+ ♞d7 15.♞e6 ♞a5 16.♞xb2 ♞d5 17.♞xf8+ ♞xf8 18.♞d5 cxd5 19.d3=) 14...♞b6 15.a3 ♞d8 16.♞e6, with a strong attack.

12...♞d6 13.a3! ♞a4 14.♞b3 ♞xb2 15.♞xb2 ♞d8 16.axb4 ♞xa1 17.♞xa1 ♞xb4 18.♞e6 ♞c7



19. ♖c3?

Berczes has been playing perfectly so far and he needed only one more accurate move to finish off the opponent: 19. ♖a3! (defending the d4-knight!) 19... ♜b8 20. ♙xc8 ♜xc8 21. ♜xc6+.

19... ♜b8 20. ♙xc8?

White was either in time trouble or he thought that everything was

winning. 20. ♜e4 c5 21. ♜b3 ♙xe6 22. ♜bxc5 ♙c8 23. ♜b1 ♜c4 24. d3! was decisive.

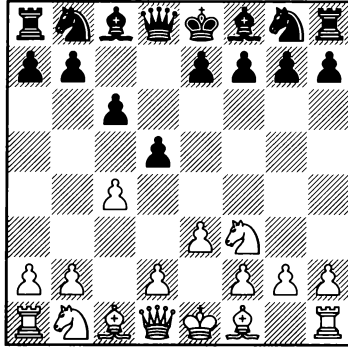
20... ♜xd4! 21. ♙h3 f5 22. ♜a5?

This mistake turns the tables. 22. ♙xf5 ♜a7 23. ♜b1 ♜xf5 24. ♜xf5 was still in his favour.

22...g6 23. ♜a1 ♙g7 24. g3 ♜c8 25. ♙g2 ♜a7 26. ♜xa7+ ♜xa7 27. ♜e1 ♜c8 28. ♜f1 ♜d8 29. ♜e2 ♜e8+ 30. ♜d1 ♜xe1+ 31. ♜xe1 ♙xc3 32. dxc3 ♜c7 33. ♜e2 ♜d6 34. ♜e3 ♜e7 35. ♙f1 ♜d5+ 36. ♜d4 c5+ 37. ♜d3 ♜f6 38. f3 b5 39. ♜d2 c4 40. ♜e3 ♜c5 41. ♜d2 ♜d5 42. ♙e2 b4 43. cxb4+ ♜xb4 44. ♙d1 ♜d4 45. ♙a4 g5 46. ♙d7 f4 47. gxf4 gxf4 48. ♙f5 h6 49. ♙h7 ♜d5 50. ♙g6 ♜e3 51. ♜e2 ♜c3 52. ♙f7 ♜c2 53. ♙g6+ ♜b2 54. ♙d3 c3 0-1

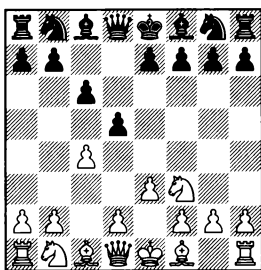
Anti-Slav

Anti-Chebanenko

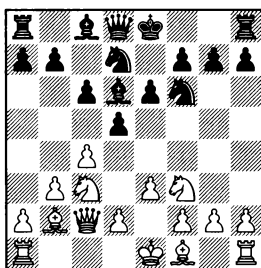


Main Ideas

1.♟f3 d5 2.♞c4 c6 3.e3!



Our aim in the opening is to reach the following position:



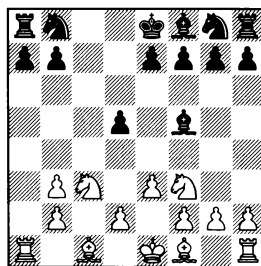
Here I advocate a rare and very aggressive approach, connected with a kingside attack by g2-g4. I will also examine a more restrained development where White also delays d2-d4, but does not burn bridges behind him and castles short.

The problem is how to steer the opponent into our desired set-up. In this part I examine several systems where Black avoids typical Meran structures.

3...♞d7 4.♞c3 ♞gf6 5.♞c2 e5 hardly deserves much attention, because White obtains a good centre and the initiative after 6.cxd5 ♞xd5 7.d4 ♞d6 8.♞d2!?, preparing 0-0-0.

By playing 2...c6, Black has clearly displayed his intention to lead out his bishop to f5 or g4. Our move order is aimed exactly against that. This thematic development does not work here because of the weak d5-pawn and the possibility of White's knight to jump to d4 or e5 with tempo. For example:

3...♞f5 4.♞b3 ♞b6 (4...♞c7 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♞c3 e6 7.♞a4+ ♞c6 8.♞d4 ♞g6 9.b3±) 5.cxd5 ♞xb3 6.axb3 cxd5 7.♞c3

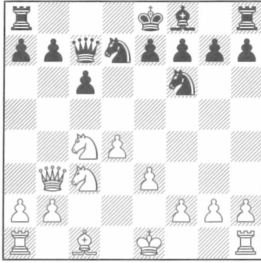


Black is losing a pawn.

3...♞g4 4.♞b3 ♞c7 5.♞e5 ♞e6 6.d4 ♞d7 7.♞c3 dxc4 8.♞xc4 ♞xc4

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

9.♞xc4 ♞gf6



10.a4 e6 11.e4±.

Perhaps you should remember that we meet any bishop sortie with ♟b3, **without exchanging on d5**. This might be useful in some lines with ...♟c7.

3...♞f6 4.♞c3 ♟g4 is an attempt to improve on the previous line. 5.♟b3 ♟b6 6.♞e5 ♟e6 7.d4

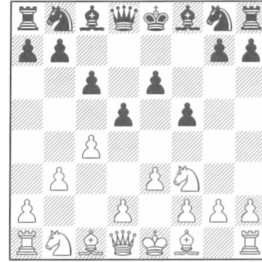


White has a space advantage on the queenside. He can develop his initiative with ♞a4.

3...g6 4.♞c3 ♟g7 5.d4 ♞f6 6.♟e2 transposes to the Schlechter System which is too passive for contemporary tastes.

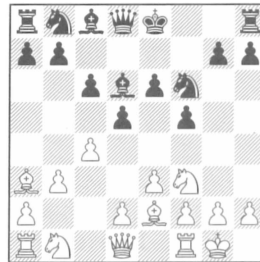
3...e6 4.b3! f5 is another pas-

sive set-up, based on the Stonewall System.



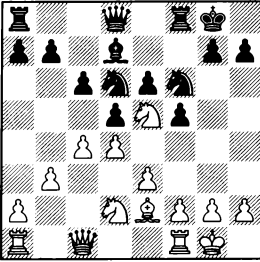
At least Black can argue here that he is exploiting White's 3.e3. Indeed, the king's fianchetto is a more popular weapon against the Stonewall. However, I adhere to Petrosian's view that the best approach of White towards the Dutch is to not hamper the opponent to play it! Black's dark squares are chronically weak and we should underline that by trading dark-squared bishops.

5.♟e2 ♞f6 6.0-0 ♟d6 7.♟a3!



Now 8...e5?! 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♟b5+! ♞c6 10.♟c1 gives White control over the dark squares, so Black should find another way of developing the c8-bishop. He can try to manoeuvre it to h5:

7...0-0 8.d4 ♖e4 9.♖c1 ♜d7
10.♙xd6 ♜xd6 11.♜bd2 ♜f6 12.♜e5
♙d7

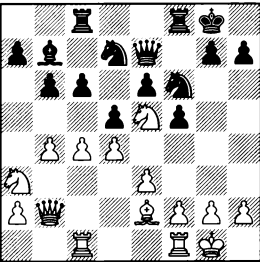


White has clear play on the queenside:

13.c5 ♜f7 14.♜xf7 ♖xf7 15.♜f3
♙e8 16.b4. See **Game 4 Laznicka-Valeanu**, Herceg Novi 2005.

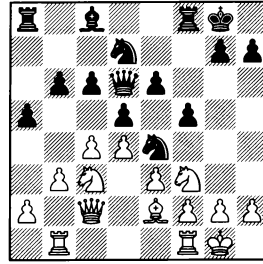
More often Black fianchettoes his bishop. Then we attack with b4:

7...♙xa3 8.♜xa3 ♖d6 9.♖c1 0-0
10.♖b2 b6 11.d4 ♙b7 12.♖ac1 ♜bd7
13.♜e5 ♖ac8 14.b4 ♖e7



White has a small advantage after 15.♜b1 ♜xe5 16.dxe5 ♜e4 17.f3 ♜g5 18.c5.

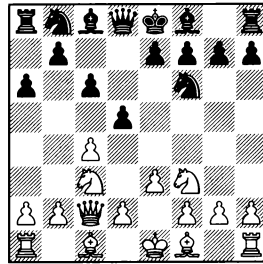
Black can try to prevent b3-b4 by ...a5, but then the b6-pawn and the whole queenside become weaker. White should exploit that by opening files on that wing:



13.♜a4! Now 13...♙b7?! stumbles into 14.♜xb6± while 13...c5 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♖bc1 or 13...♖e7 14.cxd5 give White a lasting initiative on the queenside.

One of the most popular systems nowadays are the set-ups with an early ...a6. The first critical position arises after:

**3...♜f6 (3...a6 4.♜c3 ♜f6)
4.♜c3 a6 5.♖c2!**



White can also transpose to the extensively tested main line of the Chebanenko with 5.d4, but I think that he has good prospects for an edge with the Réti approach.

I'll not pay much attention to **5...♙g4 6.♜e5 ♙e6**, because Black's set-up is obviously dubious. White

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

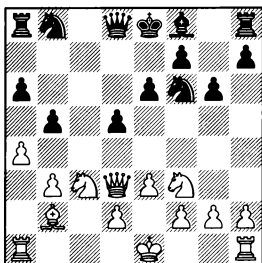
has a space advantage after 7.d4 ♞bd7 8.♙e2!

5...e6 is the second most popular Black's choice (after 5...g6), but it looks like a concession. After all, it does not fit in with Black's initial plans. In my opinion, the bayonet attack would be the most challenging continuation:

6.b3!? ♞bd7 (or 6...c5 7.♙d3! ♞c6 8.a3, with fresh, interesting play) 7.♙b2 ♙d6 8.♞g1!?. I examine this plan in the next part.

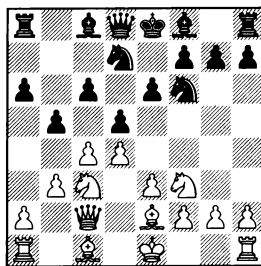
5...b5 is more consistent. 6.b3 e6

6...g6 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♙b2 ♙f5 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♞xd3 e6 11.a4! demonstrates one of the main ideas of our opening strategy:



White's pieces are like a compressed spring. Black often seizes more space, but then he finds himself overextended and underdeveloped: 11...b4 12.♞e4! ♙g7 13.♞xf6+ ♙xf6 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6 15.♞c1±.

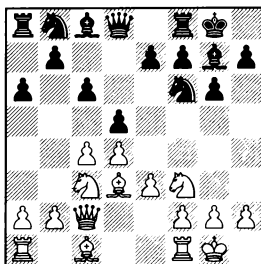
7.d4 ♞bd7 8.♙e2



White is going to gain space with c5 and switch his attention to the breakthrough e3-e4: 8...♙e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♙b2 ♙b7 11.c5 or 8...♙d6 9.♙b2 ♙b7 10.c5, transposing to Part 6/ line C1. See my **game 12 Delchev-Brunello**, Porto Carras 10.11.2011.

5...g6 is the main line. We have nothing better than:

6.d4 ♙g7 7.♙d3 0-0 8.0-0



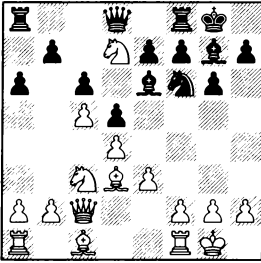
This is the Schlechter System with ♞c2 a6 inserted.

8...♙g4

The bishop would be too passive on b7: 8...b5 9.b3 ♞bd7 10.h3 ♙b7. We apply the usual recipe against a b7-bishop – we prevent ...c5 and pre-

pare e4: 11.c5! a5 12.a3 e5 13.dxe5
 ♖e8 14.e4!±.

9.♗e5 ♕e6 10.c5! ♜bd7
 11.♜xd7



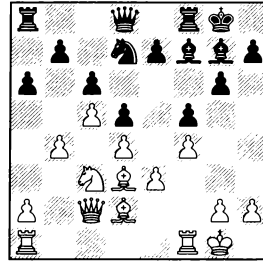
Both sides have defined their plans. Black will attack on the kingside while we'll try to exploit our space advantage on the opposite wing. Note, however, that White should not hurry to push b4!. If Black exchanges the queens through f5, we will have a more effective plan – a rook lift to b3 ties Black down with the defence of the b7-pawn, then the breakthrough e3-e4 should gain some edge. See **game 6 Postny-Himanshu**, New Delhi 2011. If Black keeps the queens for an attack, again we

should delay the queenside advance in favour of development.

a) 11...♙xd7 12.♗d2! ♗f5 13.♗xf5
 gxf5 14.♜e2 ♜h8 15.♜f4 ♖g8 16.f3
 ♗h6 17.♜d3 ♖g7 18.♖ael ♖ag8
 19.♖e2 ♗e6

This position has been reached in Laznicka-Postny, Kolkata 2009. Perhaps best is 20.♖fe1 in order to use the open e-file after 20...f4 21.♜h1 ♜h5 22.exf4±.

b) 11...♜xd7 12.♗d2 f5 13.b4 ♗f7
 14.f4!



White should be slightly better after ♗d2-e1-g3. See **game 5 Koneru-Stefanova**, Ulaanbaatar 2010.

Points to remember:

White meets ...♗f5 or ...♗g4 with ♗b3.

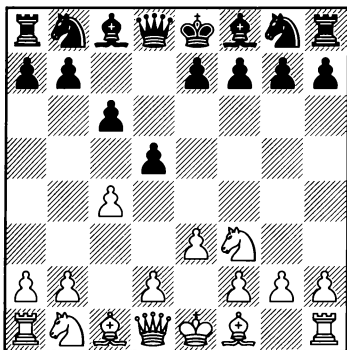
White meets ...g6 with d4.

If Black plays an early ...a6 and ...b5, White answers b3, completes development and plays c4-c5 followed up by e3-e4.

If Black plays an early ...a6 and ...g6, White answers d4, later – c4-c5 and does not hurry with b4.

Step by Step

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3!



In this part I examine several systems where Black avoids typical Meran structures.

A. 3... ♖d7; B. 3... g6; C. 3... ♗f5; D. Set-up with ... ♗g4; E. 3... e6 followed by ... f5; F. Set-up with an early ... a6.

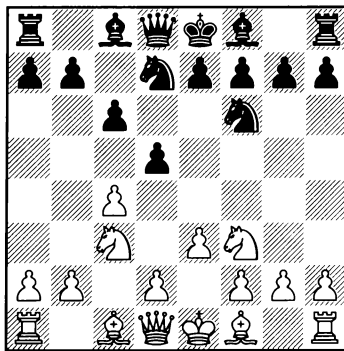
The main variation 3... ♖f6 4. ♖c3 e6 is subject of the next parts.

A. 3... ♖d7

Black aims to occupy the centre by ... e5. This logical move is seldom seen in practice probably because his position after cxd5 is too passive. At the same time, it is very solid and I do not think that White has much after 4. ♖c3 ♖gf6 5. cxd5

cx d5 (5... ♖xd5 6. d4) 6. d4 e6 7. ♗d3 a6. I suggest to keep the tension in the centre.

4. ♖c3 ♖gf6



5. ♖c2!

The only sensible way to stick to our repertoire since 5. b3?! e5! 6. cxd5 cxd5 7. ♗b2 a6 is unacceptable for White. The queen move prevents this variation in view of 5... e5 6. cxd5 cxd5? 7. ♖b5.

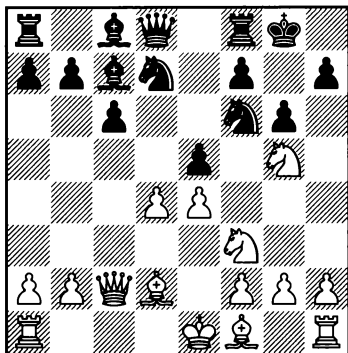
5... e5 6. cxd5 ♖xd5 7. d4

Sicilian adepts might prefer 7. ♗e2 ♗d6 8. 0-0 0-0∞ as in Fressinet-Kasimdzhanov, Nancy 2011.

7... ♗d6 8. ♗d2!?

Preparing 0-0-0.

8...0-0 9.♖e4 ♗c7 10.♖eg5
g6 11.e4 ♖5f6



12.♗c4!

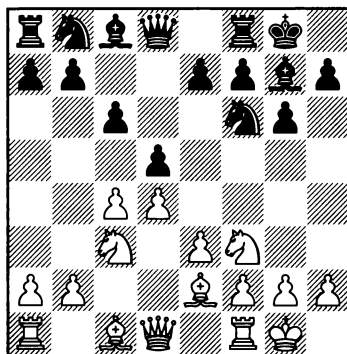
12.♖xe5 ♖xe5 13.dxe5 ♗xe5
14.0-0-0 looks promising. Indeed,
14...♞e7 15.♗b1 (or 15.h3 c5 16.♖f3
♗d4 17.♗d3↑) 15...c5 (15...♗d7
16.♗e3 b6 17.h3 c5 18.♖f3) 16.h4
♖g4 17.♗c4 b5 18.♗d5 ♗b7 19.♗xb7
♞xb7 20.h5 ♖xf2 21.♞xc5± favours
White, but 15...♞c7!, taking f4 un-
der control, is unclear. It is safer to
lead an attack with short castling.

12...exd4 13.0-0 ♞e7 (13...c5
14.♗ae1±) 14.♗ae1↑

The pawn structure resembles
the variation with 3.e4 e5 in the
QGA.

**B. 3...g6 4.♖c3 ♗g7 5.d4 ♖f6
6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0**

Play has transposed to the
Schlechter System. I'll only mention
the two most popular continuations:



a) 7...a6 8.♞b3 e6 (8...dxc4
9.♗xc4 b5 10.♗e2 ♖bd7 11.e4±)
9.♗d1

The character of play is not
forced. White can also develop
with 9.♗d2 ♖bd7 (9...♖e4 10.♗e1
♖d6 11.c5 ♖f5 12.♗d1 ♖d7 13.e4±)
10.♗fd1.

9...♖bd7 10.a4 a5 11.♞c2±.

b) 7...dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗g4 9.h3
♗xf3 10.♞xf3 ♖bd7 11.♗d1 e5 12.d5
e4 13.♖xe4 ♖xe4 14.♞xe4 ♖b6
15.♗b1 ♗e8 16.♞d3 cxd5 17.♗b5 ♗e7
18.♞b3 ♗c8 19.♗d2±, Turov-Ipatov,
Nakhchivan 2011.

C. 3...♗f5

This thematic development does
not work here because of the weak
d5-pawn and the square d4 which
can be occupied with tempo by ♖f3.

4.♞b3 ♞b6

4...♞c7 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.♖c3 e6 of-
fers White two good options :

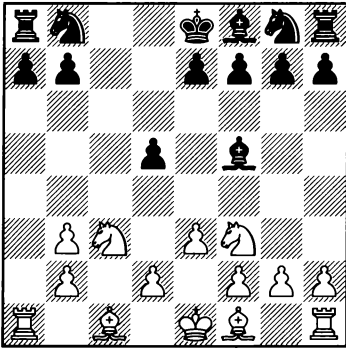
a) 7.♖b5 ♞b6 8.♞c3! ♖c6 9.♖d6+

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

♟xd6 10.♞xg7 ♘b4 11.♞d4 ♔e7
12.♞xh8 ♞c7 13.♞xf5+ exf5 14.♞c3
♞c2+ 15.♔d1 ♘xa1 16.♞xc7+ ♟xc7
17.b3 ♞f6 18.f3, with the bishop
pair advantage.

b) 7.♞a4+ ♘c6 (7...♞d7 8.♞b5
♞b6 9.♞d4±) 8.♞d4 ♟g6 9.b3 a6
10.♞xc6 bxc6 11.♟a3 ♟xa3 12.♞xa3
♞e7 13.♟e2 0-0 14.0-0±.

5.cxd5 ♞xb3 6.axb3 cxd5
7.♞c3



It turns out that Black is losing
a pawn:

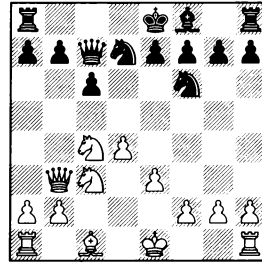
7...e6 8.♞b5 ♔d8 9.♞xa7±.

D. Set-up with ...♟g4

3...♞f6

It makes sense to take the sting
out of ♞b3. The immediate 3...♟g4
4.♞b3 is awkward for Black (4.cxd5
cxd5 5.♞b3 allows the defence 5...
♞c7 6.♟b5+ ♞d7 7.♞c3 ♟xf3 8.gxf3
e6 9.d4 ♞gf6 10.e4 a6 11.♟e2,

Kramnik-Eljanov, Moscow 2010,
11...♞b6, with an unclear game.)
4...♞c7 5.♞e5 ♟e6 6.d4 ♞d7 7.♞c3
dxc4 8.♟xc4 ♟xc4 9.♞xc4 ♞gf6.
(White is also somewhat better af-
ter 9...b5 10.♞d2 ♞f6 11.♞ce4.)

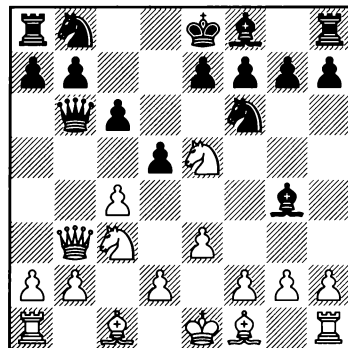


The game Flores-Peralta, Men-
doza 2008, went 10.e4 b5 11.♞e3
when 11...e5 would have blocked the
centre. I propose 10.a4 e6 11.e4±.

4.♞c3 ♟g4 (4...♟f5 5.cxd5!
cxd5 6.♞b3)

At first glance Black has solved
the problem of the Slav bishop, but
a couple of simple moves dissipate
the illusion:

5.♞b3 ♞b6 6.♞e5



6...♙e6

Alternatively:

a) 6...♙f5 7.♖xb6 axb6 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♗xd5 cxd5 10.♙b5+ ♘d7 11.f4 g6 12.d3 f6 13.♗f3 ♙f7 14.e4 dxe4 15.dxe4±, Chatalbashev-Drabke, Antalya 2004.

b) 6...e6 7.♗xg4 ♘xg4. White has a bishop pair and a spatial advantage. Now, or on the next move, he can play ♖c2, with a flexible pawn formation. Rai.Garcia-Ginzburg, Buenos Aires 1995, went 8.♙e2 ♗f6 9.d4 ♗bd7 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♖c2 0-0 12.b3 ♜fc8 13.♙b2±.

7.d4

Now the other bishop got stuck on f8 and should look for sideways.

7...♗bd7

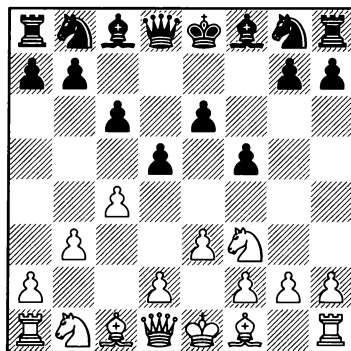
7...g6 8.♙d3 ♙g7 9.0-0 0-0 is a rare line of the Schlechter system. After 10.♖a3 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♖c7 12.♙d2 ♜e8, Basagic-Ivacic, Slovenia 1996, White has more space and good control of the centre.

8.♗xd7 ♙xd7 (8...♗xd7 9.cxd5) 9.♗a4 ♖xb3 10.axb3 a6 11.♙d3 e6 12.♙d2 ♙d6 13.♙a5 ♙e7 14.c5

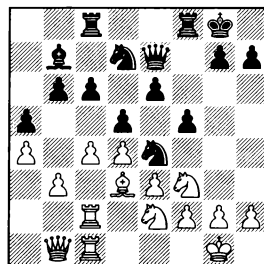
White has some space advantage and his outpost on b6 is cramping the opponent's queenside. The game Ponomariov-Ivanchuk, Dagomys 2010, went:

14...♙b8 15.♗d2 e5 16.♗b6 ♜a7 17.f3 h5 18.dxe5 ♙xe5 19.♙c3±.

E. 3...e6 4.b3 f5



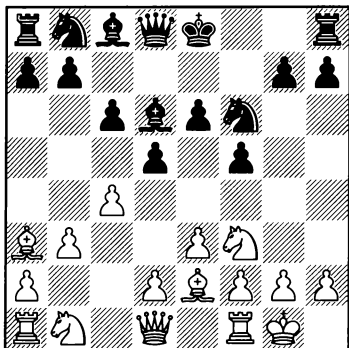
In this version of the Stonewall, White should trade dark-squared bishops and expand on the queenside. Of course, he can play d4 at any moment and transpose to standard lines. Then he should follow the set-up of the game Ilinic-Kiroski, Belgrade 1995, which went 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.♗f3 ♗f6 6.♙d3 ♙d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 ♗e4 9.♗e2 ♗d7 10.a4 b6 11.♙a3 ♙xa3 12.♜xa3 a5 13.♜a2 ♙b7 14.♜c2 ♜c8 15.♖b1 ♖e7 16.♜fc1.



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

White has a slight pull here, but he lacks the thematic plan with b4. I propose to rip benefits from having delayed d4 and ♟c3:

5.♙e2 ♟f6 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.♙a3!



E1. 8...e5?!, E2. 7...♙xa3; E3. 7...b6; E4. 8...♟e4.

E1. 8...e5?!

This is consistent, but Black is underdeveloped and his pieces are hanging.

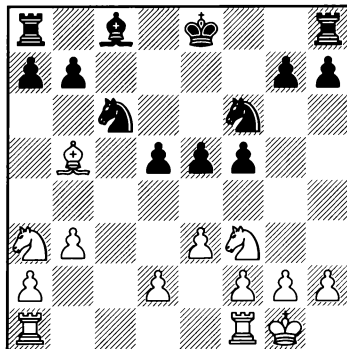
8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♙b5+!

Taimanov-Persson, Stockholm 1994, saw 9.d4 ♙xa3 10.♟xa3 e4 11.♟e5 0-0 12.♞c1 a6 13.♞c2 ♟fd7 14.f4±, but the text is more straightforward.

9...♟c6

9...♙d7 drops a pawn to 10.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 11.♙xd6 ♞xd6 12.♞c2 while 9...♟f7 10.d4± is also gloom.

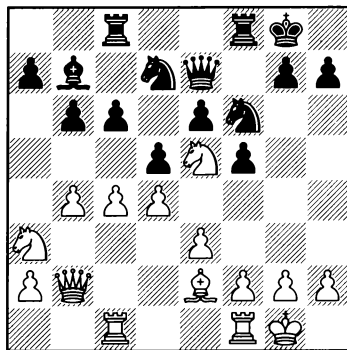
10.♞c1 ♞c7 11.♙xd6 ♞xd6
12.♞a3 ♞xa3 13.♟xa3



Black loses control over the dark squares, because 13...♟g4 14.♞ac1 ♙d7 15.h3 e4 16.hxg4 would cost him a pawn.

13...e4 14.♟d4 ♙d7 15.♙xc6 bxc6 16.♞fc1 ♞c8 17.♞c5±.

E2. 7...♙xa3 8.♟xa3 ♞d6 9.♞c1 0-0 10.♞b2 b6 11.d4 ♙b7 12.♞ac1 ♟bd7 13.♟e5 ♞ac8 14.b4 ♞e7



White has a small advantage,

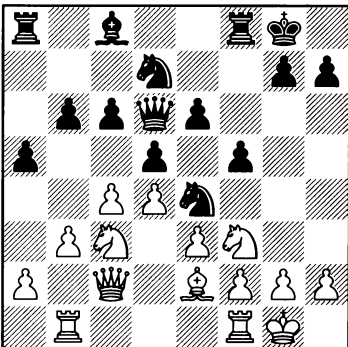
but the centre is still unstable. In the game Malaniuk-Tregubov, Krasnodar 1997, White spent a tempo on 15.♘d3 and allowed exchanges after 15...♙b8 16.♘b1 ♗fc8 17.♘d2 ♘e4 18.♘f3 c5. He should have started redeployment of his knight right away with:

15.♘b1 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♘e4 17.f3 ♘g5 18.c5±.

E3. 7...b6 8.♙xd6 ♗xd6 9.d4

White transposes to a typical Stonewall. Without dark-squared bishops, this is a sensible decision, which should assure him of some edge. The Réti-approach 9.♘c3 0-0 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗c2 is also possible, because 11...f4 (11...♙e6 12.d4) would stumble into 12.e4!.

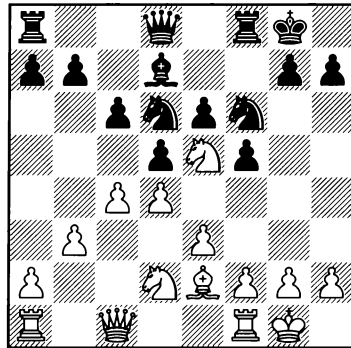
9...♘bd7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗c2 ♘e4 12.♙ab1 a5



Black has prevented b4, but now 13.♘a4! pinpoints the weakness on b6. Grigoryan-Yudin, St.

Petersburg 2010, went 13...♙b7?! 14.♘xb6±. 13...c5 is more precise, but after 14.cxd5 exd5 15.♙bcl White enjoys a lasting initiative on the queenside.

E4. 8...♘e4 9.♗c1 ♘d7 10.♙xd6 ♘xd6 11.♘bd2 ♘f6 12.♘e5 ♙d7



This is the most passive, but solid development of the light-squared bishop. Black avoids any weaknesses and hopes to withstand a long siege after:

13.c5 ♘f7 14.♘xf7 ♗xf7 15.♘f3 ♙e8 16.b4

Game 4 Laznicka-Valeanu, Herceg Novi 2005, is a model example how to exploit White's dominance by opening a second front on the kingside.

F. Set-up with an early ...a6

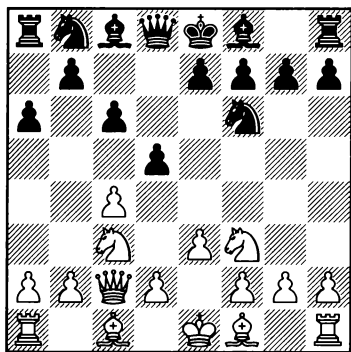
3...♘f6 (3...a6 4.♘c3 ♘f6) 4.♘c3 a6 5.♗c2

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

5.d4 transposes to the extensively tested main line of the Chebanenko System. Then 5...b5 6.b3 is still in course of development, but I find it difficult to recommend a line against 5...e6, followed by ...c6-c5. I play it successfully as Black.

Apart from 5.♞c2, White has also tested 5.b3. He was slightly better in Morozevich-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 2007, after 5...♙g4 6.♙e2 e6 7.♙b2 ♖bd7 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♙xf3 ♙b4 10.♞c2 0-0 11.0-0 ♞e7 12.♞ad1 ♞ac8 13.g3 ♖e5 14.♙g2 ♜fd8 15.♖e2 ♖g6 16.f4 ♖e8 17.f5 exf5 18.♖d4±, but 5...♙f5 6.♙e2 h6 7.♙a3 ♖bd7 8.0-0 e6 9.♙xf8 ♖xf8 10.d4 ♖8d7 equalised in Radjabov-Vallejo Pons, Porto Carras 2011.

The queen move aims to impede the development of Black's bishop.



Black has tried here: F1. 5...♙g4; F2. 5...e6; F3. 5...b5; F4. 5...g6.

F1. 5...♙g4 6.♖e5 ♙e6

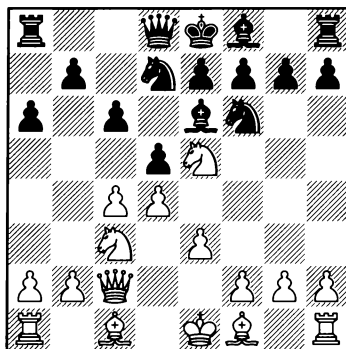
6...e6 7.♖xg4 ♖xg4 is solid, but rather dull. White is assured of a

long-term small edge with ♙e2, d4, b3, ♙b2.

7.d4

The pure Réti approach 7.b3!? (delaying d2-d4) is also an option: 7...g6 8.♙b2 ♙g7 9.♙e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♙f5 (10...♖bd7 11.♖a4±) 11.d3 ♞d6 12.♖a4 ♖bd7 13.c5 ♞c7 14.f4±, Janssen-Svetushkin, Kavala 2008.

7...♖bd7



8.♙e2!

Ivanchuk and Dreev have played 8.♖d3 to win their games after 8...♖b6? 9.c5 ♖bd7 10.♖f4 ♙g4 11.h3 ♙h5 12.♖xh5±, Ivanchuk-Postny, Kallithea 2009 or 8...g5? 9.cxd5 ♖xd5 10.h4 g4 11.e4±, Dreev-Panarin, playchess.com 2004. However, Black should have sacrificed a pawn with an excellent compensation after 8...♙f5! 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♞b3 e6 11.♞xb7 ♙d6 12.♙e2 0-0 13.0-0 ♞e7 14.♞b3 ♜fc8.

Natural development of the bishop to e2 is better. Now it is not clear how Black should continue.

8...dxc4 9.♟xc4± surrenders the centre, but 8...♟xe5 9.dxe5 ♟d7 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.f4± is not a good option either. As a whole, White has the upper hand owing to the awkward position of the e6-bishop.

F2. 5...e6

I prefer to continue here in the Réti style with b3, ♟d3, leaving the pawn at d2. This development is considered in line F22. However, switching to well tested lines with 6.d4 is also popular, and it is certainly less committal.

F21. 6.d4; F22. 6.b3!?

F21. 6.d4 c5

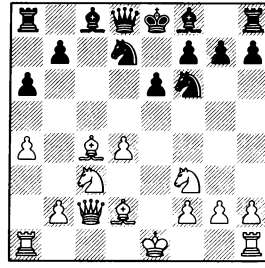
Alternatively:

a) 6...b5 7.b3 ♟bd7 8.♟d3 ♟b7 9.0-0 ♟e7 10.c5 is rather gloom for Black. He cannot push 10...e5 in view of 11.dxe5 ♟g4 12.♟xd5, Khenkin-Kaesser, Osterburg 2006. Therefore, he cannot prevent White from playing e4, with a big space advantage.

b) 6...♟bd7 7.♟d2

Carlsen has crushed Nakamura with this move in Monaco 2011. Practice has seen Black gradually equalising after 7.b3 ♟d6 8.♟b2 0-0 9.♟e2 e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♟xe5 12.0-0 ♟g4 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5 14.♟xg4 ♟xg4 15.h3 ♟f6.

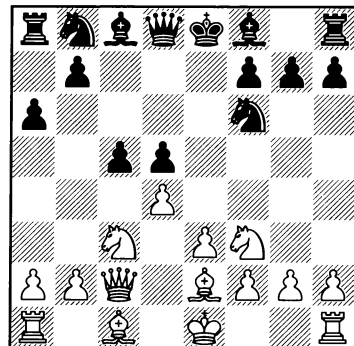
7...dxc4 8.a4! c5 9.♟xc4 cxd4 10.exd4



This treatment of IQP positions (with a4), has been popularized by Topalov and now we see another top player choosing it. Black's task is not easy. Nakamura had previously played this position as White against Ni Hua, London 2009: 10... ♟e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♟ac1 ♟b6 13.♟d3 h6 14.♟b3 ♟bd5 15.♟xd5 ♟xd5. Now 16.♟c2±, building a ♟-♟ battery against the enemy king, would have provoked ...f5 and the hole on e5 would give White an edge. It is interesting to see Nakamura in Black's shoes:

10...♟b6 11.♟d3 ♟bd5 12.♟xd5 ♟xd5 13.0-0 ♟b4 14.♟xb4 ♟xb4 15.♟xh7!. So he had no improvement at all! White was on top after 15...g6 16.♟xg6 fxg6 17.♟xg6+.

7.cxd5 exd5 8.♟e2

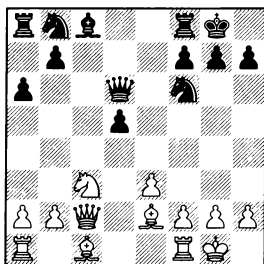


1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

8...♞c6

8...cxd4! is seldom seen, but I think that it gives Black more chances to equalise. Then 9.exd4 ♞c6 10.0-0 (or 10.♞e5 ♟d6!) 10... ♟d6 (10...♟e7 is passive. White is slightly better after 11.♞e5 0-0 12.♞xc6 bxc6 13.♞a4 ♜c7 14.♟d3) 11.♟g5 ♟e6 12.♞d2 h6 is roughly equal. Thus White should choose:

9.♞xd4 ♟d6 10.♞f5 0-0 11.♞xd6 ♞xd6 12.0-0



12...♞c6!

Naturally, the side with an isolated pawn should avoid exchanges. Gustafsson-Handke, Germany 2010, saw 12...♟g4 13.♞d1 ♟xe2 [13...♞c6 14.h3 (14.♞xd5 ♟xe2 15.♞xf6+ ♜xf6 16.♞xe2 ♞ad8) 14...♟xe2 15.♞xe2 ♞ac8 16.♞b3] 14.♞xe2 ♞c6 15.♟d2 ♞g4 16.♞g3±.

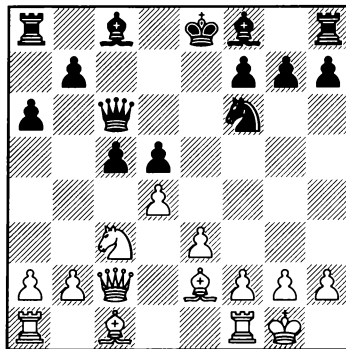
13.♞d1 ♞e5=.

9.♞e5! ♜c7 10.♞xc6 ♜xc6

10...bxc6 stumbles into 11.e4!! cxd4 (11...dxe4 12.♞xe4 cxd4 13.♞xf6+ gxf6 14.0-0±) 12.♞xd5 ♞xd5 13.exd5 ♟b7 (or 13...♟b4+ 14.♟d2 ♟xd2+ 15.♞xd2 c5 16.0-0 0-0 17.b4 cxb4 18.♞xb4 ♜c3 19.♞c4

♟d7 20.♞ac1 ♞b2 21.♞b1 ♜c3 22.♞fc1 ♜xc4 23.♟xc4±) 14.0-0 ♟d6 15.♟f3 cxd5 16.♞e1+ ♟f8 17.♞xc7 ♟xc7 18.b3 ♟d6 19.♟b2±, Zhou Wei-qi-Ni Hua, Danzhou 2010.

11.0-0



11.dxc5 is premature due to 11... ♟xc5=. Note that 11...♞xc5 12.♟d2 ♟d6 does not transpose to the main line since White has more useful moves than castling, namely 13.♞c1 0-0 14.♞b3±, Bu Xiangzhi-Ni Hua, Guangzhou 2010.

11...♟d6

After 11...cxd4 12.exd4 the symmetry works in White's favour because his pieces are better stationed: 12...♟d6 (12...♟b4 13.♟f4 ♟xc3 14.♞xc3 ♜xc3 15.bxc3 ♟d7 16.a4± leaves White with a backward pawn on c3, but the bishop pair and the open b-file gave him an edge in Mamedyarov-Wang Yue Elista 2008.) 13.♟f3 h6 14.♟d2 0-0 15.♞ac1 ♟e6 16.♞b3 ♞d7 17.♞a4 ♞e4 (17...♞ae8) 18.♟xe4 dxe4,

Xiu-Deepan Chakkravarthy, Subic Bay 2009. Now 19.♖b6± wins the exchange for a pawn.

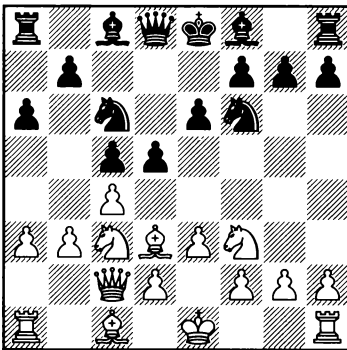
12.dxc5 ♖xc5 13.♗d2 0-0 14.♞ac1

This position has arisen in Mamedyarov-Grischuk, Nalchik 2009. Apparently, Black did not want to defend a somewhat passive set-up with an isolated pawn after 14...♗e6 15.♖d3 so he decided to get rid of it by 14...d4 15.♗e4 ♗xe4 16.♖xe4 ♖e5 17.♖xe5 ♗xe5 18.b3±. The threat of ♗f3 hampers Black's development.

F22. 6.b3!? c5

6...♗bd7 7.d4 ♗d6 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 transposes to a well known Anti-Meran position, but 7.♗b2 ♗d6 8.♞g1!? is more entertaining. I examine this plan in the next part.

7.♗d3! (7.cxd5 exd5=) 7...♗c6 8.a3



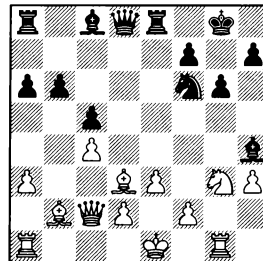
8...g6

Black bolsters his castling position. 8...d4 9.♗e4 favours White, but:

8...♗e7 deserves serious attention. After 9.♗b2 0-0 I have analysed 10.♗e2 (10.cxd5 exd5 11.♗a4 b6 12.♗xf6? ♗xf6 13.♗xh7+ loses material) 10...b6 and now White can organise a kingside attack using the g- or the h-file:

a) 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♗g3 g6 13.h4 ♗d6 14.h5†.

b) 11.g4 e5 (first line of the engines) 12.♗xe5 ♗xe5 13.♗xe5 ♗xg4 (13...dxc4 14.bxc4 ♗xg4 15.♞g1 g6 16.♞b1 ♗f3 17.♞g3→ ♗b7 18.♗xg6!! is crushing, for instance: 18...fxg6 19.♞xg6+ ♖h8 20.♞h6 ♖f7 21.♗f4 ♖g8 22.♗e2±) 14.♗b2 ♗h4 15.♗g3 dxc4 16.bxc4 g6 17.h3 ♗f6 18.♞g1 ♞e8



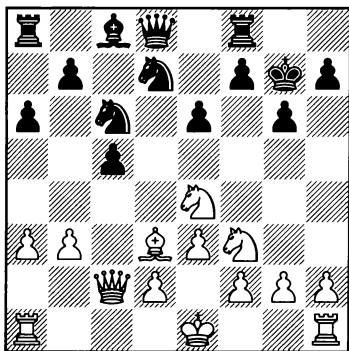
White has a strong initiative. His next step should be to open the centre in order to activate the second rook: 19.♖c3 ♖f8 20.0-0-0 ♗b7 21.♗c2 b5 22.d4†.

9.♗b2 ♗g7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.cxd5 ♖xd5

It would be interesting to test 11...exd5 12.♖xc5 ♗g4∞.

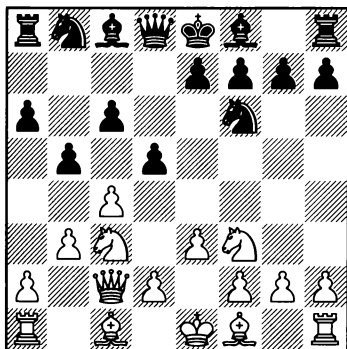
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

12.♞c3 ♖d8 13.♞e4 ♞d7
14.♙xg7 ♜xg7



This position has been reached in the game Iturrizaga-Malakhatko, Cannes 2010. White has the better pieces. He could have fixed his advantage with 15.♙e2 hitting c5 and preparing d2-d4.

F3. 5...b5 6.b3

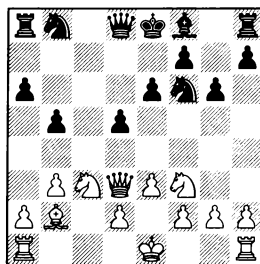


Black is trying to follow the Chebanenko approach, but in this set-up ♜c2 is more useful than d4. For instance, the thematic:

6...♙g4?! faces 7.♞e5 and the bishop can not retreat to f5 while the unsuspecting 7...♙h5? turned out to be a blunder in Ivanchuk-Bu Xiangzhi, Sofia 2008: 8.cxb5 cxb5?! 9.♙xb5+! axb5 10.♞xb5 and the game was over.

In practice Black often tries to exploit the early development of White's queen by:

6...g6 Here again, White is better off without d4: 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♙b2 ♙f5 9.♙d3 ♙xd3 10.♞xd3 e6 (the long diagonal is open so 10...♙g7? loses to 11.♞xd5!)



Black's queenside is weakened and White should immediately take advantage of that by:

11.a4!

Instead, Bu Xiangzhi-Matlakov, Moscow 2010 saw 11.♞c1 ♞bd7 12.♞e2 ♙d6 13.♞c6 ♖e7 14.♙xf6 ♖xf6, when neither 15.♞c2 ♙a3 16.0-0 0-0 17.♞b1 ♖e7 18.d4 ♙d6 19.♞c1 ♞b8=, nor 15.0-0 ♖e7 16.a4 bxa4 give a substantial edge.

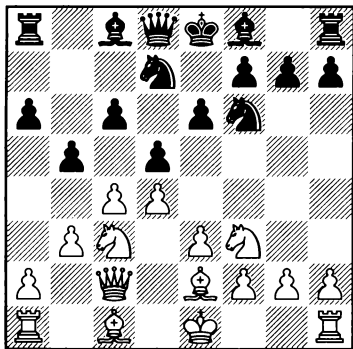
Following 11.a4, 11...bxa4 12.♞xa4 ♞bd7 13.0-0 ♙d6 14.♞fc1± is clearly in White's favour as well as 11...b4 12.♞e4 ♙g7 13.♞xf6+ ♙xf6 14.♙xf6 ♖xf6 15.♞c1±.

6...e6 7.d4

This move is not mandatory yet, but sooner or later White will have to play it. He can start with 7.♗b2, though.

7...♖bd7 8.♗e2

White's general plan in this position is to gain space on the queenside with c4-c5 and prepare e4. 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.c5 also serves well this goal and gives White an edge, for example, 9...g6 10.0-0 ♗g7 11.e4± (It is possible to delay e3-e4 for a few moves: 11.a3 a5 12.♗b2 0-0 13.♖e2 ♜c7 14.h3.) 11...b4 12.e5 bxc3 13.exf6 ♖xf6 14.♜xc3, with the more active pieces.

**8...♗e7**

8...♗d6 9.♗b2 ♗b7 10.c5 transposes to Part 6/ line C1. See my **game 12 Delchev-Brunello**, Porto Carras 10.11.2011.

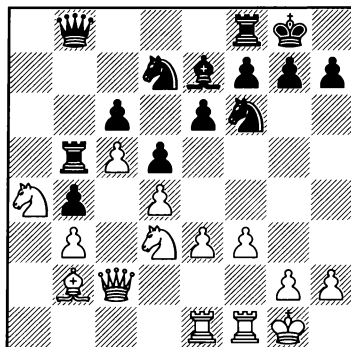
9.0-0 0-0 10.♗b2 ♗b7 11.c5

White is not interested in keeping the tension in the centre anymore. For example, after 11.♗ad1 ♜c7 White has not anything better than 12.c5, but then why has he put the rook on d1?!

11...b4

Or White will play b4 himself.

12.♖a4 a5 13.a3 ♗a6 14.♗xa6 ♜xa6 15.axb4 axb4 16.♖e1 ♜b8 17.♖d3 ♜a5 18.f3 ♜b5 19.♜ae1±



White has the better prospects, Ilincic-Popchev, Jagodina 1993.

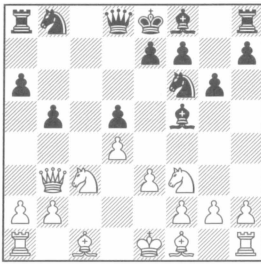
F4. 5...g6 6.d4

Perhaps I should explain why we have to play d4 right now. Indeed, White can pursue the Réti scenario with 6.b3 ♗g7 7.♗b2 0-0 8.♗e2, but after 8...♜e8 9.0-0 e5 all the fun is for Black. We should aim for a more active set-up, connected with ♗d3.

6...♗g7

1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

Black plays this move almost automatically, but the big question is what happens in the event of 6...♙f5. The only chance to get something out of the opening is to exploit the temporary weakness of the enemy queenside. We answer with 7.♜b3 b5 (7...♞a7 is too passive. White is somewhat better following 8.♙e2 ♙g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.a4!, for example, 10...♜e4 11.♙xe4 ♙xe4 12.♜d2 ♙f5 13.a5±) 8.cxd5 cxd5



I would like very much to play here 9.a4, but then 9...b4!! 10.♜xb4 ♜c6 would earn the initiative.

The game Matveeva-Gunina, Moscow 2009, went 9.♜e5 ♜bd7? 10.a4 b4 11.♜xd5 ♜xe5 12.♜xf6+ exf6 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.♙c4 ♜d7 (14...♜f6! is stronger, but White retains some pull after 15.♙d2 ♙d6 16.♙d5 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♜xe6 18.♜xe6+ fxe6 19.e4 ♞c8 20.♜e2 ♜e7 21.♞ac1±) and here 15.e4! would have given White a terrific initiative: 15...♙xe4 [or 15...♙e6 16.♙xe6 ♜xe6 17.♜xe6+ fxe6 18.♙e3 ♞c8 19.♜d2 ♙c5 (19...♙e7 20.♞hc1 ♜d7 21.♞xc8 ♞xc8 22.♜d3) 20.♙xc5 ♞xc5 21.♞hc1 ♞xc1 22.♞xc1 ♜d7 23.♞c5±] 16.0-0 ♙c6 17.♙g5 ♙g7 18.♜xb4.

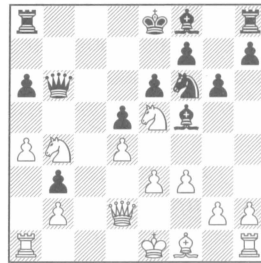
However, 9.♜e5 is probably not the best move. The engines propose a paradoxical retort: 9...e6!? 10.f3 h5! and I could not find a way to break through Black's trenches along the fifth rank.

In the position on the last diagram, White should revive the threat of a4 by:

9.♙d2! ♜c6 10.♜e5 ♜a5 11.♜d1 ♜c4 12.a4!

The pawn structure after 12.♜xc4 dxc4 (12...bxc4 13.b3±) looks to be in White's favour because he can gradually put his central cluster in motion, for example, 13.♙e2 ♞c8 14.♙f3 ♙e6 15.♜c2 ♙g7 16.0-0 0-0 17.♜e2 ♙d5 18.e4 ♙b7. However, Black's pieces are well stationed.

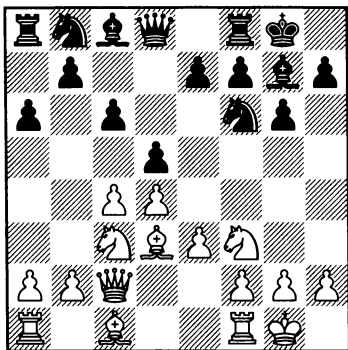
12...♜xd2 13.♜xd2 b4 14.♜a2 e6 15.f3 b3 16.♜b4 ♜b6



The a6-pawn may be protected, but only at the expense of Black's king. White deals a terrific blow:

17.♜xa6! ♞xa6 18.♞c1!! and there is suddenly no defence against ♙b5+, e.g. 18...♞xa4 19.♞c8+ ♜e7 20.♞b8 ♜c7 21.♙b5+.

7.♠d3 0-0 8.0-0



This is the Schlechter System with ♖c2 a6 inserted. White's game is slightly better because he has more space on the queenside.

8...♗g4

The bishop would be too dull on b7, for instance:

a) 8...b5 9.b3 ♠bd7 10.h3 10.♗b2 ♗b7 11.♞fd1 (11.c5 e5) 11...♞c8 12.♞ac1 ♖c7 13.a3, with a small edge, is also possible, Akeson-Hammer, Gausdal 2005.

10...♗b7 11.c5 a5 12.a3 e5 13.dxe5 ♠e8, Chernin-Murey, Copenhagen 1986. In these structures White can only gain an advantage with the breakthrough e3-e4 and it is quite strong here.

b) 8...♠bd7 9.b3

Undoubtedly, 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♠d2 b6 (10...b5 11.♞fc1±) 11.♞fc1 retains some pull: 11...♗b7 12.♠e2 ♞c8, Maiorov-Flachet, Sautron 2008, 13.♞a4!±.

9...♞e8 10.♗b2 dxc4 11.bxc4

e5 12.a4 ♞e7 13.♗a3 ♞e6 14.d5±, Lautier-Relange, Besancon 1999.

c) 8...♗e6 9.c5! ♗g4 (9...♠bd7 10.♠g5) 10.♠e5 ♠bd7 11.h3! ♗e6 12.♠f3 b6 13.cxb6 c5 14.b3±, Akeson-Hellsten, Sweden 1998.

9.♠e5 ♗e6 10.c5!

The right plan! Alternatives are:

a) 10.♠d2 gives Black the opportunity to open the centre with:

10...dxc4!

10...♠bd7 allows White to return to the plan with c4-c5 after 11.♠xd7 ♗xd7 (11...♞xd7 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♠a4 ♞ac8 14.♠c5 ♖c7 15.♞b3 ♗f5 16.♗xf5 gxf5 17.♞ac1±) 12.c5±.

11.♠xc4 b5!

The breakthrough ...e7-e5 assumes that Black will part with the bishop pair: 11...♠bd7 12.b4! ♗xc4 13.♗xc4 e5 14.dxe5 ♠xe5 15.♗e2 ♞d6 16.♞ab1 ♞ad8 17.♞fd1 ♠eg4 18.g3±.

12.♠e5 c5 13.dxc5 ♖c7 14.♠f3 ♞xc5 15.♠d4 ♗d7 16.b4

In A.Maric-Zhu Chen, Moscow 2001, White became even worse after 16.a3?! ♠c6 17.♠b3 ♞d6 18.♞ad1 ♠e5±.

16...♞b6 17.a4 ♠c6 18.♠xc6 ♗xc6 19.axb5 axb5 20.♞xa8 ♞xa8 21.♞c1, M.Gurevich-Van Haastert, Belgium 2003. Here 21...♠g4!? 22.h3 ♠e5 equalises.

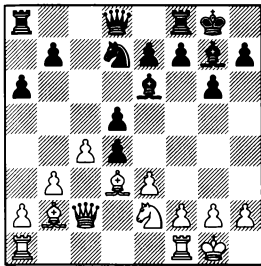
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

b) 10.b3 has been played in a fair amount of games:

10...c5! 11.♞e2 ♞fd7!

I have tried once 11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♞c6 13.♞xc6 bxc6±, but White is better here. Another option is 11...dxc4 12.bxc4 ♞fd7 13.♞xd7 ♟xd7 14.♞b1 ♞c6 15.dxc5±.

12.♞xd7 ♞xd7 13.♟b2 cxd4

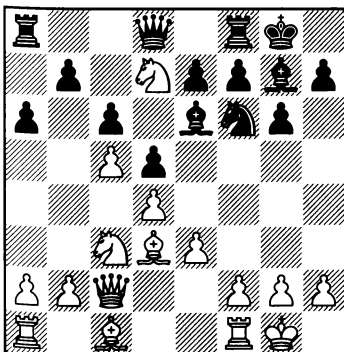


14.exd4

14.♞xd4 dxc4 15.bxc4 ♞c5 16.♞xe6 ♞xe6 17.♟xg7 ♟xg7 18.♟e4 ♞b8 does not promise White much. I would rather take Black here.

14...dxc4 15.bxc4 ♞c8 16.♞f4 (16.d5 ♞c5=) 16...♟xc4 17.♟xc4 ♞b6 18.♟xf7+ ♞xf7 and only Black could aspire to the advantage here.

10...♞bd7 11.♞xd7



D41. 11...♞xd7; D42. 11...♞xd7.

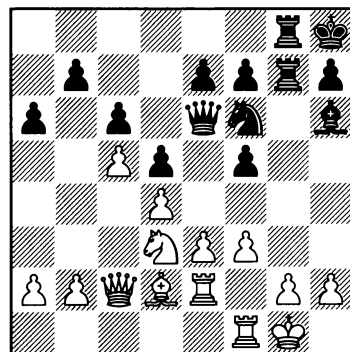
D41. 11...♞xd7

Black aims to swap his light-squared bishop through f5. The drawback of this plan is that Black's pawn formation loses its flexibility. That might be critical in an endgame when Black pushes ...e5 and the f5-pawn remains without support.

12.♟d2!

Occasionally, White plays 12.b4. This advance has no alternatives in the event of 12...♟f5 13.♟xf5 gxf5, but if Black swaps queens by 13...♞xf5, White will remain without an effective plan. I show in the commentaries of **game 6 Postny-Himanshu**, New Delhi 2011, that without queens White has more winning chances with the pawn on b2. In the endgame he should hit b7 by the rook lift ♞a1-c1-c3-b3 and prepare e3-e4.

12...♟f5 13.♟xf5 gxf5 (13...♞xf5?!) 14.♞e2 ♟h8 15.♞f4 ♟g8 16.f3 ♟h6 17.♞d3 ♟g7 18.♞ae1 ♟ag8 19.♞e2 ♞e6



This position has been reached in Laznicka-Postny, Kolkata 2009. White is slightly better, because he has the plan with b4-b5 in reserve while the opponent can only rely on tactical tricks. Perhaps best is 20.♖fe1 in order to use the open e-file after 20...f4 21.♗h1 ♜h5 22.exf4±.

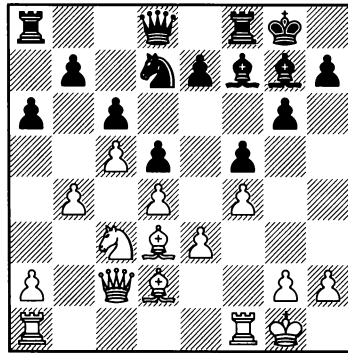
F42. 11...♜xd7 12.♙d2

This move order is not obligatory. White can also begin with 12.b4 when 12...f5 should transpose to the main line. Black can also try to prepare ...e5 by 12...f6, but this move is theoretically unimportant as White can force ...f5 with 13.f4 (13...♙f7?! 14.f5). Note that 13.e4 dxe4 14.♜xe4 ♙f7 as in Tomashevsky-Yevseev, Sochi 2006, is also good for White following 15.♙b2 h6 16.♜d2 f5 17.♖fe1.

12...f5 (12...f6 13.f4 ♙f7 14.f5 ♖e8 15.e4±) **13.b4 ♙f7 14.f4!**

It is difficult to break through after 14.♜e2 e5 15.dxe5 ♜xe5, although in Macieja-Wojtaszek, Warsaw 2009, White got an edge after 16.♙c3 ♖h4?! (16...♖e7) 17.♙d4 ♜d7 18.♖c3 ♙xd4 19.♖xd4 ♖xd4 20.exd4 ♜f6 21.a4 ♜e4 22.♞a2 ♙e8 23.f3 ♜g5 24.♜f4 ♙d7 25.♞fa1 ♜e6 26.♜xe6 ♙xe6 27.b5±.

With the text, White fixed her space advantage and will enjoy a lasting pressure.

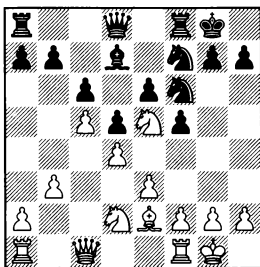


See **game 5 Koneru-Stefanova**, Ulaanbaatar 2010.

Complete Games

4. Laznicka–Valeanu Herceg Novi 16.09.2005

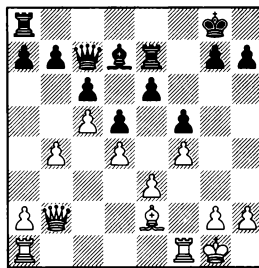
1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.e3 c6 4.b3
f5 5.♙e2 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♙d6 7.♙a3
0-0 8.d4 ♘e4 9.♖c1 ♘d7 10.♙xd6
♘xd6 11.♘bd2 ♘f6 12.♘e5 ♙d7
13.c5 ♘f7



The position looks too closed and Black obviously relies on the well known fact that one weakness should not lead to a loss. This logic is still correct indeed. White cannot win only by attacking c6 or another queenside pawn. His decisive breakthrough should happen on the opposite wing. That explains his following move. Generally, the side with a space advantage should avoid exchanges, but in the concrete example, the black knights would be dangerous if White tried to open the kingside. So the young

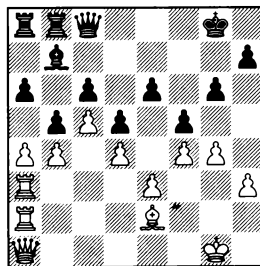
Laznicka makes a good strategic decision:

14.♘xf7 ♖xf7 15.♘f3 ♙e8 16.b4
♖e7 17.♘e5 ♘d7 18.♘xd7 ♙xd7
19.♖b2 ♖c7 20.f4!



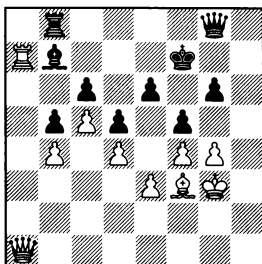
White's play is so clear and consistent that it does not need any comments.

20...b6 21.♖fc1 ♖ee8 22.♖c3
♖eb8 23.a4 a6 24.♖ab1 b5 25.♖a1
♙c8 26.♖a3 ♙b7 27.♖ca1 ♖c8
28.♖1a2 ♘f8 29.♖a1 ♘g8 30.h3
g6 31.g4



The second stage of the game begins. The question now is could White infiltrate his queen or king into the enemy camp.

31...♖h8 32.♔g2 ♕g8 33.♔g3
♕f7 34.h4 ♕f6 35.♙f3 ♕f7 36.h5
♚g8 37.hxg6+ hxg6 38.axb5 axb5
39.♟a7 ♟a7 40.♟a7



40...g5

This move only helps White, but Black cannot stay passive anymore. After 40...♔g7 41.♚h1 ♚h8 42.♚xh8+ ♕xh8 43.♔h4 ♕g7 44.♔g5 he is in fact in a *zugzwang*: 44...♕f7 45.gxf5 gxf5 (45...exf5 46.♙xd5+!) 46.♙h5+ ♕e7 47.♙g6 ♕d7 48.♕f6.

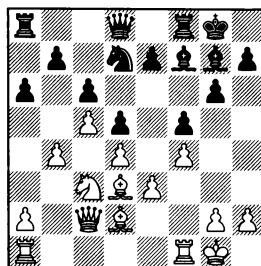
Following 40...g5, White wins with 41.♚h1 gxf4+ 42.♕xf4 fxg4 43.♙xg4 ♚g7 44.♕f3! (clearing the h2-b8 diagonal) 44...♕e7 45.♚h4+ (or even 45.♚h2 ♟f8+ 46.♕e2 ♚xg4+ 47.♕d2+-) 45...♟f6+ 46.♚xf6+ ♕xf6 47.♕f4 ♕e7 48.♕e5 ♕d7 49.♟a2 ♟h8 50.♟f2 ♟h7 51.♟f7+.

41.♚a6?! ♚c8 42.♚b6?!
gxf4+? 43.exf4 fxg4 44.♙xg4 ♕f6
45.♚a5 ♟a8 46.♟xa8 ♙xa8 47.♚a1
♙b7 48.♚e1 ♚d7 49.♚e5+ ♕f7

50.f5 exf5 51.♙xf5 ♚d8 52.♚e6+
♕f8 53.♚h6+ ♕f7 54.♙e6+ ♕e7
55.♚g5+ 1-0

5. Koneru–Stefanova Ulaanbaatar, 2010

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3
a6 5.♚c2 g6 6.♙d3 ♙g7 7.♘f3 0-0
8.0-0 ♙g4 9.♘e5 ♙e6 10.c5 ♘bd7
11.♘xd7 ♘xd7 12.♙d2 f5 13.b4
♙f7 14.f4



An important typical position with a closed centre. In the previous game we have observed the same pawn formation, but without dark-squared bishops. In principle, this exchange should favour White. On the other hand, here Black's pawn chain on the queenside is weakened and she cannot keep it close by ...b5. To take stock, White's game is easier. She will push b5 and open files on the left wing. So Black should hurry to create counterplay or at least distract some white pieces from the queenside.

14...e6

This move looks ugly, but it is the only way to achieve the break-

through ...g6-g5. 14...♟f6 15.♙e1 ♟e4 16.♙h4 would have allowed White to activate her passive bishop.

15.a4?!

This advance was not going to run away. Besides, White had a more urgent task. He should decide how to meet ...g5. The most consistent way is 15.♙e1 g5 16.♙g3, but then 16...gxf4 17.♙xf4 e5 18.dxe5 ♙g6 19.e6 ♟e5 20.♟e2 (or 20.♙ad1 ♟xd3 21.♙xd3 ♙e8 22.♟e2 ♙xe6 23.♟d4 ♙e4 24.♙d2) 20...♟xd3 21.♙xd3 ♙xa1 22.♙xa1 ♙e8 23.♟d4 ♙f6 24.♙f1 ♙xe6 25.♟xe6 ♙xe6 leads to a position where White's better bishop is hardly enough for a win. The further course of the game suggests that White should make a useful prophylactic move:

15.♟h1! Now 15...g5 fails to 16.fxg5 ♙xg5 17.e4, so Black should prepare it by 15...♟f6 when we activate the knight – 16.♟a4. (16.♙e1 g5 17.♟e2 ♟e4 18.♙xe4 dxe4 19.♙b1 gxf4 20.♟xf4 is also possible.) 16...♟e4 (16...♟d7 is too passive and gives White a comfortable edge after 17.♙e1 g5 18.♙g3 g4 19.♟c3 h5 20.a4 h4 21.♙e1 ♙f6 22.♙b1 ♙h6 23.b5 axb5 24.axb5 ♟f6 25.bxc6 bxc6 26.♟a4±.) 17.♟b6 ♙b8 18.♙e1 g5 19.♙xe4 dxe4 20.♟c4±.

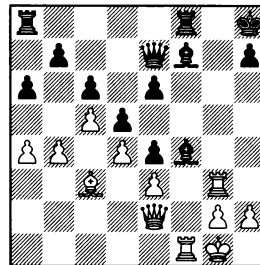
15...g5!

15...♟f6 does not make much sense: 16.b5 axb5 (16...a5 only makes a target after 17.bxc6 bxc6

18.♙fb1 ♙c7 19.♙b3 ♙fb8 20.♙ab1 ♟e4 21.♟xe4 fxe4 22.♙e2) 17.axb5 ♟e4 18.♟xe4 fxe4 19.♙e2±. The black pieces are very passive.

16.fxg5

Of course, White should not open the g-file with 16.g3 gxf4 17.gxf4 ♙h5 18.b5 ♙f6±. She could also try 16.♟e2, intending to recapture on f4 by knight. The problem with this set-up is that Black can exchange the knight for her bishop and reach a drawish position, for example: 16...gxf4 17.♟xf4 ♙e7 18.♙ab1 (18.b5 stumbles into 18...axb5 19.axb5 ♙xa1 20.♙xa1 e5) 18.♙f3 ♟f6 19.♙c3 (against ...e5) 19...♟e4 20.♙xe4 fxe4 21.♙g3 ♟h8 22.♙e2 ♙h6 23.♙f1 ♙xf4=.



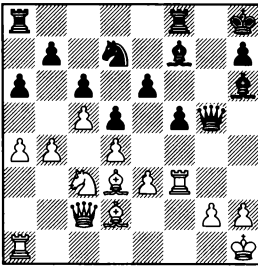
It is difficult for White to avoid this scenario. We clearly see that she has missed the moment for manoeuvring the bishop to g3 via e1.

16...♙xg5 17.♟h1

It is late for 17.♟e2 ♙e7 18.♙e1 (18.♟h1 ♟f6 19.♙e1 ♟g4), because Black can take over the initiative with 18...e5! 19.♟g3 (19.♙xf5 ♙g6

20.♙xg6 ♖xf1+ 21.♗xf1 hxg6 22.♙f2 ♖f8 23.♗g1 exd4 24.♜xd4 ♖e8 is excellent for Black.) 19...♙g6 20.♜xf5 ♙xf5 21.♙xf5 exd4 22.♙xh7+ ♗h8 23.♙f5 d3. I'd say that this position is unclear, e.g. 24.♖d1 ♙xa1 25.♖xa1+ ♗g8 26.♖f3 ♖xf5 27.♖xf5 ♖f8 28.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29.♖d4 ♖f5∞.

17...♙h6 18.♖f3 ♗h8



19.♖g3

19.♜e2 ♖g8 20.♖g3 ♖e7 21.♖h3 ♜f6! is equal. White would not be able to avoid the exchange of her knight.

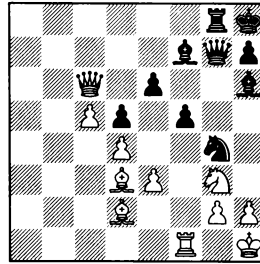
19...♖f6 20.♖f1

The rook is more useful on g1, but 20.♜e2 ♖g8 21.♖h3 ♖g7 22.♖g1 ♜f6 23.♜f4 ♙xf4 24.♙xf4 ♙h5 is also fine for Black.

20...♖g8 21.♜e2 ♖xg3 22.♜xg3

The knight is shaky on g3, but at least it covers the g-file and gives White a respite, so she can proceed with her opening plan on the queenside. Play is double-edged, but dynamically balanced.

22...♖g8 23.b5 axb5 24.axb5 ♖g7 25.bxc6 bxc6 26.♖a4! ♜f6 27.♖xc6 ♜g4



A critical position. Black is threatening with ...♜xh2. A good defence is 28.♖c7 ♜xe3 (28...♙xe3 29.♙xe3 ♜xe3 30.♖f4 ♜g4 31.♖f3±) 29.♖f3 ♖xd4 30.♖xf7 ♖xd3 31.♙xe3 ♙xe3 32.♖f6+ ♖g7 33.c6 ♖c4! 34.♖xe6 ♖xg3 35.♖e8+ ♖g8 36.♖xe3 ♖xc6 37.♖f5 ♖b7, with a draw. However, White makes a natural move:

28.♖f3 ♜xe3??

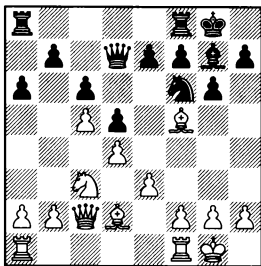
A horrible blunder. 28...♜xh2! was the logical continuation of Black's attack. The game should finish peacefully then after 29.♜xh2 ♙h5! 30.♖xe6 (or 30.♖f2 ♖xg3+ 31.♜g1 ♙xe3 32.♙xe3 ♖xe3 33.♖d6!, with a compensation for the pawn.) 30...♙xf3 31.♖e5!! ♖xe5 32.dxe5 ♙e4 33.♙xe4 fxe4 34.♜f5 and White even has some initiative thanks to her fantastic knight.

29.♖xe3 f4 30.♖xe6 ♙xe6 31.♖xe6 fxg3 32.♖xh6 ♖a8 33.hxg3 ♖a1+ 34.♜h2 ♖d1 35.♙e2 1-0

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

6. Postny–Himanshu New Delhi 2011

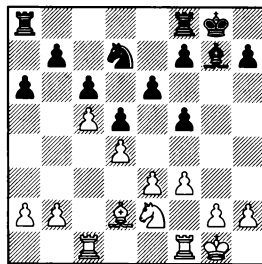
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♞c3 ♞f6 4.e3
a6 5.♞c2 g6 6.♙d3 ♙g7 7.♟f3
0-0 8.0-0 ♙g4 9.♞e5 ♙e6 10.c5
♞bd7 11.♞xd7 ♞xd7 12.♙d2 ♙f5
13.♙xf5



13...♙xf5

Black does not achieve good results in this endgame, but in fact this recapture is thoroughly consistent. After 13...gx f5, White has a clear plan with b2-b4-b5, while Black's pressure along the g-file is not too effective. The fine point behind the queen swap is that in the endgame the pawn advance on the queenside does not give White any benefits. This game illustrates why. On the other hand, I will show that without queens White receives other active options as the e4 breakthrough. All in all, Black is playing for two results only and should defend with patience and precision.

14.♞xf5 gxf5 15.f3 ♞d7 16.♞e2
e6 17.♞ac1

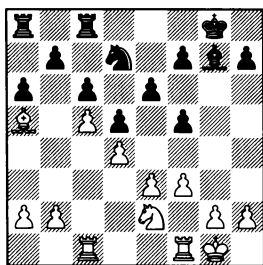


Black's only counterplay is ...e5 and White should be constantly calculating the consequences of this break. For instance, 17.♞f4 would have let in 17...e5 18.♞h5 f4.

17...♞fc8 (17...e5 18.♙c3) 18.
♞c2

18.♞f4 would have stumbled into 18...e5 so White decides firstly to consolidate his centre against a possible breakthrough and then improve his minor pieces. However, I'm not entirely sure that the knight would stand on d3 better than on e2. By all means, White should not take on e5 if Black pushed it. Instead, he should bolster d4 hoping to win the f5-pawn. In that scenario, the knight is best stationed exactly on e2 from where it can go to g3. The d2-bishop, on the contrary, does need a better diagonal. It could be shifted to g3, but:

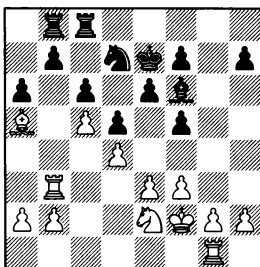
18.♙a5!? was also a good option. Let us examine the two possible approaches of Black now – the passive waiting and the active ...e5:



a) 18...♙f8 19.♞c3!?

We'll see later in the game that the plan with b4-b5 is not enough for an advantage because it opens the a-file for the black rook. It is much better to lift a rook to b3 and bind the opponent with the defence of the b7-pawn.

19...♞ab8 20.♙f2 ♙e7 21.♞b3 ♙f6 22.♞g1!?



The mobility of White's heavy pieces makes the difference. Black's rooks are tied down to the b7-pawn and would not be able to compete on the kingside. White should be looking to open play by g4 or e4. It is good to drag the h-pawn to h4. Then g3 would open a file and/or produce a distant passer.

22...h5 23.♙f4 h4 24.♙d3 ♙g7 25.g3 hxg3+ 26.♞xg3 (26.hxg3) 26...♙f6 27.♞h3 e5 28.dxe5 ♙xe5

29.♙xe5 ♙xe5 30.f4 ♙f6 31.♙f3±. White will put his rook on h6 and push h2-h4-h5 to force the enemy into a *zugzwang*.

b) 18...e5 19.♞fd1 ♞e8 20.♙f2 ♙h6 21.♞c3±. The threat of ♞b3 is very unpleasant.

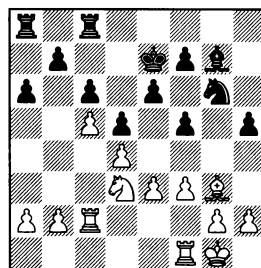
18...♙f8 19.♙f4

19.♙a5 was still possible as 19...e5 20.♞d1 ♙h6 21.♞c3 is good for White.

19...♙e7

19...e5 20.♙e2 f4 was possible, but White retains some pull with 21.♞d1.

20.♙d3 ♙f8 21.♙e1 ♙g6 22.♙g3 h5



A critical position. In my opinion, White's only sensible plan here is connected with e4. He should have tried:

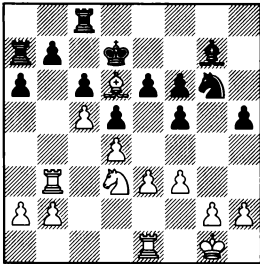
23.♞c3 ♙d7 24.♞b3 ♞a7 25.♞e1

The idea of doubling rooks on the b-file will be countered by ...e5: 25.♞c1 f6 26.♞b6 e5. Another option is 25.♙f2 f6 26.♙d6 ♙f8 27.♙xf8 ♞xf8 28.♞e1 e5 29.e4 fxe4 30.fxe4

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!

dxe4 31.♞xe4 ♜e6 32.♜e3 ♞f7=. As we see, Black's plan with ...f6 and ...e5 is viable and White should be precise with his move order. On the contrary, the idea of ...a5 is dubious since the pawn will be doomed after 25.♞e1 a5 26.♞a3 ♞e8 27.♞a4 f6 28.♟c1 e5 29.♟b3±.

25...f6 26.♞d6



Black cannot prevent e3-e4. For instance, 26...e5? would stumble into 27.e4. The only question is which are the best settings for the central break. Play might continue:

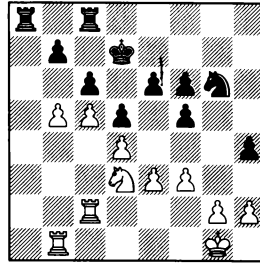
a) 26...♞f8 27.♞xf8 ♞xf8 28.e4 dxe4 29.fxe4 fxe4 30.♞xe4±. Both White's rooks are more active than its black counterparts.

b) 26...♞e8 27.g3

I have also checked the idea of manoeuvring the knight to b6, but Black's king arrives to c7 just in time to help its rook to flee from the cage: 27.♟c1 ♞h6 28.♟e2 ♞f8 29.♞xf8 ♞xf8 30.♟c3 ♜c7 31.e4 f4 32.exd5 exd5=.

27...♞h6 28.♜f2 ♟h8 (28...e5 29.dxe5 fxe5 30.e4 fxe4 31.fxe4 d4 32.♞f1 ♞f8 33.♜e2) 29.e4 fxe4 30.fxe4 dxe4 31.♞xe4±.

23.b4?! ♜d7 24.a4 h4 25.♞d6 ♞f8 26.♞xf8 ♞xf8 27.♞b1 f6 28.b5 axb5 29.axb5 ♞fc8



White has fulfilled his plan, but now the ultrapassive rook at a8 suddenly doubled its power. Black has only to push e5 to completely balance the game.

30.f4 ♞a3 31.♞d2 ♞c7?

Passive play usually costs dearly in chess. Black had the obvious 31...e5 with good counterplay, but perhaps Himanshu could not evaluate the position after 32.dxe5 fxe5 33.fxe5 ♜e6 34.♟f4+ ♟xf4 35.exf4 ♞c3, which of course, cannot be worse for him.

32.♜f2 ♞a8? 33.♞db2 ♟e7 34.♞b3 ♟g6 35.♜f3 ♟h8??

Black does not realise that he must seek to trade knight at any cost. The reason for that is the possibility of White to produce a passer on the h-file. It is very strong In a knight endgame while in a rook endgame it would be nearly irrelevant. So he should have stayed

active with 35...e5 36.dxe5 fxe5 37.fxe5 ♖e6 38.♖f4+ ♜xf4 39.exf4 ♚a5. After the text, Black can not avoid an exchange of the rooks.

36.♖1b2 ♜f7 37.bxc6+ bxc6 38.♖b8 ♖xb8 39.♖xb8 ♜d8 40.♜b4 ♖c8 41.♖xc8 ♜xc8 42.g3 hxg3 43.♜xg3+- ♜d7 44.♜h4 ♜e7 45.♜h5 ♜f7 46.♜h6 e5 47.h4 exd4 48.exd4 ♜e6 49.♜xc6 ♜xf4 50.♜b4 ♜g2 51.h5 (51.c6 was an easy win.) 51...f4 52.c6? (52.♜xd5+-) 52...♜e3 53.c7 ♜f5+

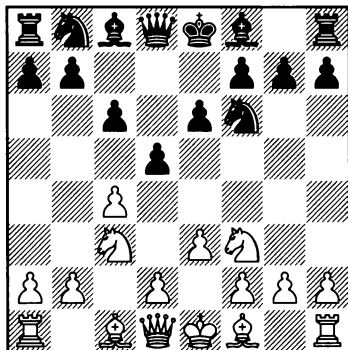
54.♜h7 ♜d6 55.♜d3?

55.♜xd5 still preserved practical chances after 55...f3 56.♜e3 f2 57.♜h6 ♜c8 58.♜f1 ♜d6 59.d5 ♜f5+ 60.♜h7 ♜d6 61.♜g3 ♜c8 62.♜h8 f5 63.♜h7 ♜d6 64.♜xf5 ♜xf5 65.c8♞ f1♞ 66.♞e6+ ♜f8 67.d6 ♜xd6±,

55...f3 56.♜f2 ♜c8 57.♜g4 ♜d6 58.♜h6+ ♜e6 59.♜g4 ♜f7 60.h6 ♜c8 61.♜f2 ♜e7 62.♜d3 ♜c8 63.♜f2 ♜e7 64.♜h3 ♜c8 65.♜f2. Draw.

Anti-Meran I

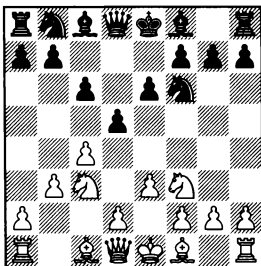
1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6



Main Ideas

In the previous part, I have dealt with Black's various ways to avoid the Meran set-up. Now I will examine positions where Black plays 4...e6, but then he tries to trick us out of our repertoire by exploiting our particular move order.

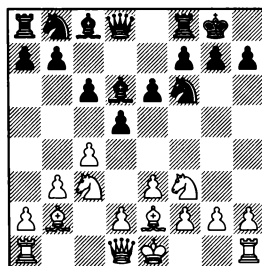
**1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6
4.♗c3 e6 5.b3!?**



An important finesse. If we choose 5.♝c2, I have no idea what to recommend against the rare sequence 5...♙d6!? 6.b3 0-0! 7.♙b2 e5! 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♘b5 ♘c6 10.♘xd6 ♝xd6.

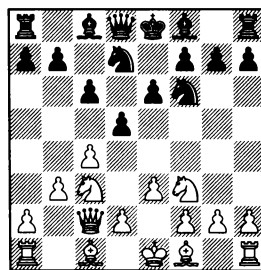
Of course, we can switch over to the normal Meran with 5.d4. After all, we have won already a small battle having sidestepped the Slav and the Chebanenko with ...a6. However, I have different plans for White.

Following 5.b3 ♙d6 6.♙b2 0-0 White should continue with 7.♙e2!.



Now 7...e5 (7...dxc4 8.♙xc4) 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♘b5 ♘c6 10.♘xd6 ♝xd6 does not equalise completely, because White's queen is not on c2 and instead he has made a useful developing move: 11.d4 e4 12.♘e5 ♙e6 13.♘xc6 ♝xc6 14.♞c1 ♞d6 15.0-0. Accordingly, Black prefers in the overwhelming majority of games 7...♘bd7 when 8.0-0 (or 8.♝c2), followed up by ♝c2, will take us to the main line of Part 6.

5...♘bd7 6.♝c2



I consider in this part 6...♙e7 and 6...b6 while the main line 6...

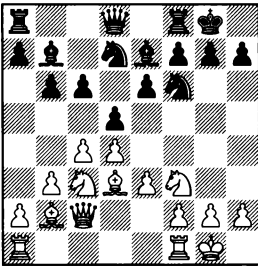
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♞f6 4.♞c3 e6

♞d6 is examined in the next two parts.

A. 6...♞e7!?

This humble development of the bishop, connected with a fianchetto of the queen's bishop, is underrated. In my opinion, White cannot prove any advantage by conventional means.

Avrukh's whole repertoire against the Slav is based on the assumption that the following position (reached after the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♟f3 ♞f6 4.e3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♞b2 b6 7.♞d3 ♞b7 8.0-0 ♞e7 9.♞c3 0-0 10.♞c2) is better for White:

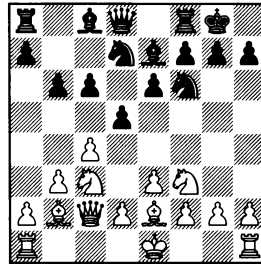


Here he examines only 10...♞c7 11.♞e5 and 10...♞c8 11.♞ad1 ♞c7 12.♞e5. However, it is well known that Black should prevent ♞e5 by 10...h6! and then put the queen's rook on d8. A fresh example is Airapetian-Dreev, Rus. ch. 2011, which went 11.♞ad1 ♞c7 12.h3 ♞ad8 13.♞e5 dxc4 14.bxc4 ♞xe5 15.dxe5 ♞d7 16.f4 ♞c5 17.♞e2 a6 18.♞f3 b5!.

I advocate a completely different approach. A sterner test of Black's set-up is the bayonet attack g2-g4.

The d-pawn should remain on d2 at least for a while. Note that If Black starts with 6...b6, then White obtains an alternative – he can favourably alter the pawn structure by 7.cxd5 because 7...cxd5 does not work – see Line B.

7.♞b2 0-0 8.♞e2 b6

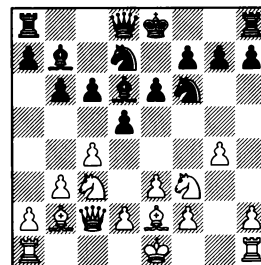


9.♞g1!? ♞b7 10.g4 ♞e8 11.g5 e5 12.d4 e4 13.♞e5 ♞d6 14.0-0-0!

I prefer White here. He has a clear plan on the kingside with g5, h5, g5-g6 (perhaps after ♞h3 first) and he also stands better in the centre. All the black pieces are passive.

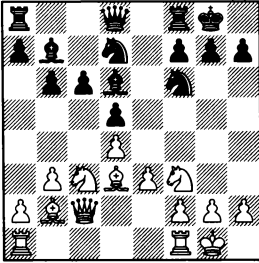
B. 6...b6 7.cxd5

A daring alternative is 7.♞b2 ♞b7 8.♞e2 ♞d6 (8...♞e7 9.g4!? or 9.♞g1) 9.g4!?



The text gives White clear play without any risks.

7...exd5 8.d4 ♖d6 9.♗d3 ♖b7
10.0-0 0-0 11.♗b2



See more about White's play in the annotated **game 7 Delchev-Collutiis**, Plovdiv 2010. I also consider the same pawn structure in Part 6, line A3. The only difference is the white bishop staying on the passive square e2, but that matters only if Black pushes ...c5-c5. If he adopts a waiting strategy, White executes the same manoeuvre – ♗f1-g2, the rooks go to e1 and d1.

Points to remember:

Play 5.b3 before ♖c2.

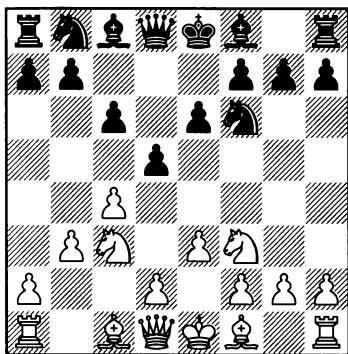
Always attack ...e6-e5 with cxd5 followed up by ♖b5.

The queenside fianchetto ...b6, regardless of Black's move order, can always be attacked with ♖g1, g4-g5.

A good solid approach against ...b6 is cxd5, followed by short castling and the manoeuvre ♗e2-f1-g2

Step by Step

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6 5. b3!?



The move order with:

5. ♖c2 seems less precise. Then 5... ♖bd7 6. b3 transposes to the main line.

Black has tried 5... c5 in only 2 games. After 6. cxd5 exd5, we can lead our bishop to e2 or b5 and play against the isolated d5-pawn:

a) 7. d4 a6 8. ♗e2 ♘c6 9. 0-0 ♗e6 10. ♖d1 cxd4 11. ♘xd4 ♘xd4 12. ♖xd4 ♗c5 13. ♖d1±.

b) 7. ♗b5+ ♘c6

White is interested in trading the bishops with 7... ♗d7 8. ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 (8... ♘bxd7 9. ♖b3) 9. d4 ♘c6 10. 0-0 c4 11. e4±, with a lead in development.

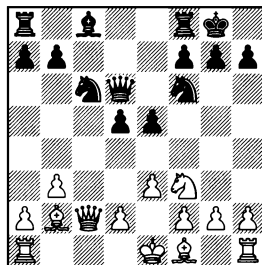
8. d4 cxd4 9. ♘xd4 ♗d7 10. 0-0 ♗d6

Or 10... ♘xd4 11. exd4 ♗e7 12. ♖e1 0-0 13. ♗xd7 (13. ♖b3±) 13... ♖xd7 14. ♗g5 ♖fe8 15. ♖b3 ♖ad8 16. ♗e5±; 10... ♖c8 11. ♘xc6 bxc6 12. ♗a6±.

11. ♘f5 ♗xf5 12. ♖xf5 0-0 13. ♖d1.

However, at this moment I have not a decent recommendation against:

5... ♗d6! 6. b3 (It is not late to return to the common lines with 6. d4!) 6... 0-0! 7. ♗b2 e5! 8. cxd5 cxd5 9. ♘b5 ♘c6 10. ♘xd6 ♖xd6



This position is about equal:

11. d4 ♘b4 12. ♖d1 e4 13. ♘e5 ♘e5 14. a3 f6=, Grandelius-Al Sayed, Bosna Open 2011;

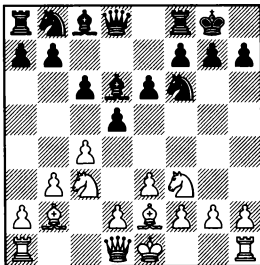
11. ♖c1 ♗g4 12. ♖c5 ♖e6 13. ♖b5 ♖ab8=, Jakubiec-Jaracz, Czech Rep. 2011. So the queen on c2 is not useful against ... ♗d6, ... 0-0 and ... e5.

5...♖bd7

5...♖d6 6.♗b2 0-0 is a very important deviation.

Note that 6...e5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♖b5 ♖c6 9.♖xd6+ ♗xd6 10.♗b5 e4 11.♖d4 0-0 is in White's favour: 12.♗e2 [Hracek advocates 12.♗c1!? 12...♖b4 (12...♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗d8 14.♗b2±) 13.a3 ♖a6 14.♗e2±] 12...♖xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗f5 14.0-0 ♖d7 15.♗c1 (15.f3 exf3 16.♗xf3 ♗g6 17.♗f4↑) 15...♖e5, Dautov-Mueller, Lippstadt 2000 and now 16.f4 exf3 17.♗xf3 ♖xf3+ 18.♗xf3 ♗e4 19.♗g4 ♗g6 20.♗xg6 hxg6 21.♗c7 b6 22.h4 f6 23.♗fc1± is rather pleasant.

White should answer 6...0-0 with 7.♗e2! and now:



a) 7...dxc4 8.♗xc4!

After 8.bxc4 e5 9.d4 exd4! (9...♖bd7 10.0-0 ♗e8 11.♗c2 ♗e7 leaves White more chances to fight for the edge, for instance, 12.♗ae1 or 12.a4 e4 13.♖d2 ♖f8 14.c5 ♗c7 15.♗a3 ♖g6 16.♖c4 ♗g4 17.♖d6 ♗xd6 18.cxd6 ♗d7 19.♗xg4 ♗xg4 20.f3 exf3 21.♗xf3 ♗e6 22.♗af1±, Ehlvest-Shankar, Kolkata 1999) 10.exd4 ♗g4!, Black solves the problem of his queen's bishop development –

11.0-0 ♖bd7 12.h3 ♗h5 13.♗e1 (13.♖h4 ♗xe2 14.♖xe2 ♗e8 15.♖f5 ♗f8 16.♖eg3=, Tomashevsky-Motylev, Sochi 2007.) 13...♗e8 14.♗c2=.

In two recent games White has tried in vain to refrain from 9.d4:

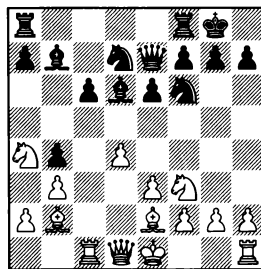
9.d3 ♗e8 10.0-0 ♗g4, Aronian-Gelfand, Leon 2010;

9.♗c2 ♗g4 10.♖e4 ♖xe4 11.♗xe4 f5 12.♗d3 ♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♗e7∞, Vitiugov-V.Popov, Rus. ch. 2011.

8...b5 9.♗e2

In the rapid game Aronian-Gelfand, Leon 2010, White retreated the bishop to d3, but after 9...♗b7 he hurried up with 10.♖e4 ♖xe4 11.♗xe4 when 11...f5! 12.♗d3 ♖d7 turned out to be unclear. Instead, he had to play 10.♗c1! and following 10...♖bd7 11.♖e4 ♖xe4 12.♗xe4 ♗c8 13.♗e2 f5 retreat to b1, with a slight pull. For instance: 14.♗b1 ♗e7 15.0-0 e5?! 16.e4 f4 17.d4.

9...b4 (or 9...♖bd7 10.♖g5 ♗b7 11.♗c2) 10.♖a4 ♖bd7 11.♗c1 ♗b7 12.d4 ♗e7



This position has been reached in Zvjaginsev-Khenkin, Herceg Novi 2001. White should be somewhat better after 13.♖d2 ♗ad8 (13...e5

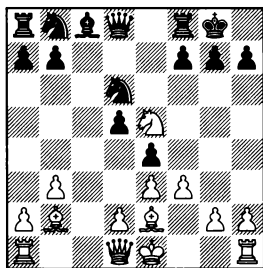
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♟f6 4.♟c3 e6

14.♟c4 ♟c7 15.♟xe5! ♟xe5 16.♟c5 ♟c8 17.dxe5±; 13...c5 14.dxc5 ♟xc5 15.♟xc5 ♟xc5 16.♟xf6 gxf6 17.♟f3±) 14.♞c2 e5 15.dxe5 ♟xe5 16.♟xe5 ♟xe5 17.♞c5 ♟d6 18.0-0±.

b) 7...e5 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.♟b5 e4

Halkias-Rapport, Vrnjacka Banja 2010, saw 9...♟c6 10.♟xd6 ♞xd6 11.d4 e4 12.♟e5 ♟e6 when 13.♟xc6 ♞xc6 14.♞c1 ♞d6 15.0-0 ♟fc8 16.h3 is slightly better for White owing to his bishop pair. After the exchange of rooks along the c-file, Black's queenside will be vulnerable as both of his minor pieces are busy on the other wing.

10.♟e5 (10.♟d4 also deserves attention, planning to undermine the centre later.) 10...♟e8 11.♟xd6 ♟xd6 12.f3



White has fulfilled his plan to obtain a complex, nonstandard position. His dark-squared bishop has great potential. Look at the variation 12...f6 13.♟g4 ♟xg4 14.fxg4 ♟c6 15.0-0 d4 16.b4 d3 17.♞b3+ ♟h8 18.♟d1 ♞e7 19.♞c1 ♞ac8 and now 20.g5! fxg5 21.♟g4↑ unleashes the bishop pair. The game Val.Povov-Inarkiev, Russia 2011 went:

12...♞h4+ 13.g3 ♞e7 14.fxe4 dxe4 15.0-0 ♟d7. Here the simple 16.♟xd7 ♟xd7 17.♟a3± would have given White some pull.

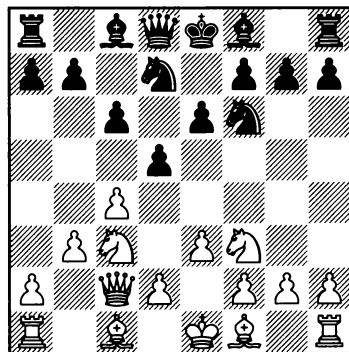
As a whole, this variation is a blank spot in theory.

Another rare alternative is 5...b6 6.♟b2 ♟b7. In Epishin-Jaracz, Bratto 2007, White has introduced here an original set-up based on the contra-fianchetto: 7.g3 ♟bd7 8.♟g2 ♟e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.d4 ♞c7 11.♞c1 ♞ad8 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♟h4 ♞b8 14.♟f5±.

In a later blitz game, Kramnik-Grachev, Wch. blitz Moscow 2010, Black put his bishop on d6 and was close to equalising: 8...♟d6 9.d4 0-0 10.0-0 h6 11.♞c1 ♞e7 12.♟d2 ♟f8 13.e4 dxe4 14.♟dxe4 ♟a3 15.♟xa3 ♞xa3 16.♞e2, but 16...a5?! gave White a lever on the queenside: 17.♟fd1 ♞e7 18.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 19.♟a4±.

The plan with g2-g4, as in the main line, is more enterprising.

6.♞c2



I will examine here A. 6...♙e7 and B. 6...b6 while 6...♙d6 is considered in the next two parts.

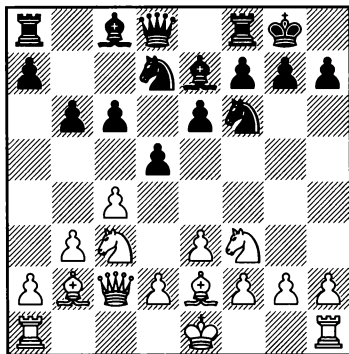
A. 6...♙e7 7.♙b2

7.d4 0-0 8.♙d3 b6 9.0-0 ♙b7 10.♙b2 (10.♙d1 ♖c7 11.♙b2 h6) 10...h6! 11.♙ad1 (11.cxd5 cxd5=) 11...♖c7 is fairly level.

7...0-0 8.♙e2

8.♙g1 e5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♙b5 is not with tempo so White would be deprived of this resource.

8...b6



The modern treatment of such positions is based on a pawn storm on the kingside. However, the sacrifice 9.g4 is dubious: 9...♙xg4 10.♙g1 ♙g6 11.0-0-0 ♙b7. So we should support the pawn by the king's rook.

9.♙g1!?

9.0-0 ♙b7 10.♙ac1 ♙c8 11.♖b1 c5 12.cxd5 ♙xd5 13.♙xd5 ♙xd5 14.d4 leads to a symmetrical position where Black should be able to neutralise White's slight lead in development.

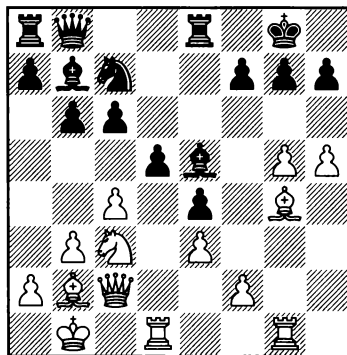
9...♙b7 10.g4 ♙e8 11.g5 e5 12.d4 e4 13.♙e5 ♙d6 14.0-0-0!

It is better to keep the centre closed and shift the focus of the game to the kingside. 14.f4 exf3 15.♙xf3 ♖e7 16.e4 dxe4 17.♖xe4 ♙c7 18.♖xe7 ♙xe7 19.0-0-0 ♙fe8 is only equal.

14...♙xe5 15.dxe5 ♙xe5 16.♙b1!

Again, 16.♙xe4 ♙xb2+ 17.♖xb2 regains the pawn, but gives Black counterplay – 17...♖e7 18.♙f6+ ♙h8 19.♙xe8 ♙axe8 20.cxd5 cxd5 21.♙b1∞.

16...♖b8 17.h4 ♙c7 18.h5 ♙e8 19.♙g4↑



I prefer White here. He has a clear plan on the kingside with g5-

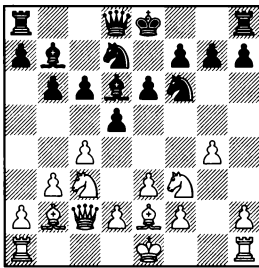
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♞c3 e6

g6 (maybe after ♟h3 first) and he can even exert pressure on the c-file by ♞c1. All the black pieces are passive.

B. 6...b6 7.cxd5

I think that White should take the opportunity to alter the pawn structure in his favour since Black cannot recapture by the c-pawn (7...cxd5? 8.♞b5).

If you like adventures, however, you might prefer 7.♟b2 ♟b7 8.♟e2 ♟d6 (8...♟e7 9.g4!? or 9.♞g1) 9.g4!?



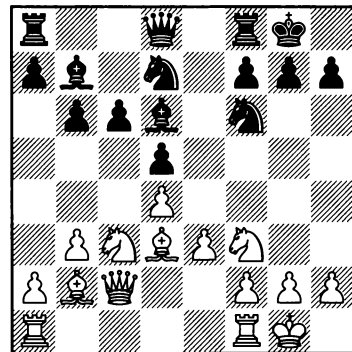
A daring attack, entirely in the spirit of our book. The game Salvador-Danielian, Cento 2011, continued 9...h6 10.♞g1 ♞e7 11.h4 ♞e5 12.g5?! (12.♞xe5! ♟xe5 13.g5 hxg5 14.hxg5 ♞d7 15.f4 ♟d6 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♞b5± would have been more accurate.) 12...hxg5 13.hxg5 ♞xf3+ 14.♟xf3 ♞d7 15.cxd5 ♞e5? (15...cxd5!∞) 16.♟e2 cxd5 17.f4 ♞c6 18.♞b5 ♞c8 19.♟xg7!+–.

In the diagram position, Black

could refrain from wakening his kingside by 9...0-0, but castling under the fire of all White's pieces is also a risky decision. White can try, for instance, 10.g5 ♞e8 11.h4 e5 12.♟d3!? g6 (12...e4 should be losing to 13.♞xe4 dxe4 14.♟xe4 g6 15.h5+–.) 13.h5 ♞c5 14.♟e2 ♞e6 15.0-0-0 ♞e7 16.♞h4→. The battle is entirely on Black's territory.

The text is more restrained and it gives White clear play without any risks.

7...exd5 8.d4 ♟d6 9.♟d3 ♟b7
10.0-0 0-0 11.♟b2



I prefer this position for White. He can manoeuvre at ease, constantly threatening with e3-e4 or b3-b4-b5. Black's only active plan is connected with ...c6-c5, but then White would have typical play against the hanging central pawns. Look at the annotations to **game 7 Delchev-Collutiis**, Plovdiv 2010.

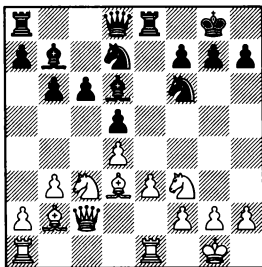
Complete Games

7. Delchev–Collutiis Euro Club Cup, Plovdiv 2010

1.♟f3 ♟f6 2.c4 c6 3.♞c3 d5 4.e3
e6 5.♞c2 ♞bd7 6.b3 b6 7.cxd5

I think that the only sensible alternative to this exchange is 7.♙e2 ♙b7 8.♙b2 ♙d6 9.g4!?

7...exd5 8.d4 ♙d6 9.♙d3 ♙b7
10.0-0 0-0 11.♙b2 ♞e8 12.♞fe1!



This pawn structure defines two main points of conflict – White is constantly threatening with e3-e4 while Black may seek counterplay with ...c6-c5. In practice, Black avoids to commit himself too early with this breakthrough since it would give the opponent clear play against the hanging pawns. He would like to shift firstly the queen

from d8 and the text is aimed exactly against 12...♞e7?! – 13.e4!.

12...♞c8 13.♞ad1

This rook should stay away from c1 to avoid exchanges. 13.♞ac1 c5 14.♞e2 ♞e4 15.♙a6 ♙xa6 16.♞xa6 ♞df6 17.dxc5 ♞xc5 18.h3 ♞d7 19.♞d3 ♞ec8 20.♞e2 ♞xc1 21.♞xc1 ♞xc1+ 22.♞xc1 was only equal in Portisch-Huebner, Manila 1990.

13.e4 does not bring any dividends at this point: 13...dxe4 14.♞xe4 ♞xe4 15.♙xe4 ♞f6 16.♙f5 ♞c7 17.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 18.♞e5 c5↑, Polugaevsky-Karpov, Roquebrune 1992.

13...♞c7

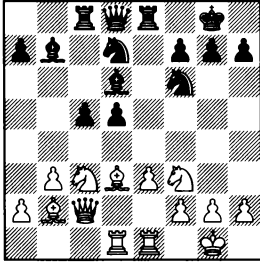
Black decides to evacuate his queen to b8. In Atalik-Buono, Brato 2005, this square was taken by the bishop:

13...♙b8 14.♙f5! ♞c7 15.g3 ♞cd8, but this set-up made effective White's other active plan – 16.b4! a6 17.a4 b5 18.a5 ♞d6 19.♙a3±. White has firmly blocked the left flank and he can finally concentrate on the centre: 19...♙c7 20.♞a1 ♞e7 21.♞d2 h5 22.e4!.

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♘f6 4. ♖c3 e6

Let us examine now the typical position with hanging pawns:

13...c5 14.dxc5 bxc5. [The isolator after 14...♖xc5 is somewhat dull for Black, e.g. 15. ♖f5 ♘e6 16. ♖d3 (16. ♖b1 ♖b4) 16...♖b8 17. ♖c1±]

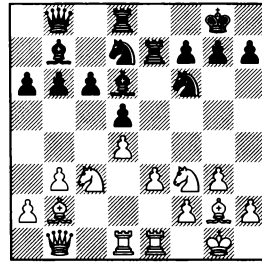


15. ♖f5! Not only pinning the d7-knight, but also bolstering the defence of White's castling position. It seems at first that it is even better to include ♘b5 first: 15. ♘b5 ♖b8 16. ♖f5 and win the exchange after 16...a6 17. ♖xf6 ♘xf6 18. ♖xc8 ♖xc8, but deeper analysis shows that White would be unable to escape a draw by perpetual after 19. ♖c3 (or 19. ♖a3) 19...d4!=. With a knight on c3, this idea is insufficient for equality: 15...d4 (15...g6 16. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 17. ♖xd5!! ♖xd5 18. ♖c3 ♖e6 19. e4 ♖c6 20. e5) 16. exd4 ♖xf3 17. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 18. gxf3 cxd4 19. ♖xd4 ♖xh2+ 20. ♖f1 ♖e5 21. ♖d3±. The pin is still a cause of concern to Black.

14. ♖b1 ♖cd8 15. g3!

A very important redeployment of the light-squared bishop. From g2 it will restrain any ideas with ...c5 and support e3-e4 at the same time.

15...♖e7 16. ♖f1 a6 17. ♖g2 ♖b8



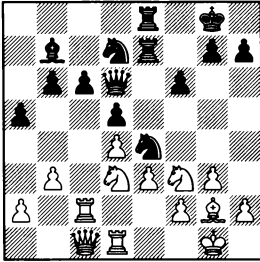
18. ♖c1

The charm of this position is that White can be manoeuvring for many moves without risking to spoil it significantly. The opponent's task is much more difficult. In the diagram position I could have pushed 18. e4 dxe4 19. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21. ♖xe4 ♖f6 (21...c5 22. d5±) 22. ♖c2 ♖d5 (22...c5 23. ♖g5±) 23. ♖e5, with some initiative, but I decided to play on accumulation of small advantages and wait for an opportunity to deal a tactical blow. My next step is to trade my passive bishop and launch a minority attack on the queenside. I'm not afraid of counterplay with 18...c5 19. dxc5 bxc5 because my pieces are well set up exactly against this breakthrough. I could continue with 20. ♖h4 d4 21. ♖a4 dxe3 22. ♖xe3 ♖xe3 23. ♖xe3 ♖xg2 24. ♖xg2±.

18...♖ee8 19. ♖a3 ♖c8 20. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 21. ♖e2 ♖e7

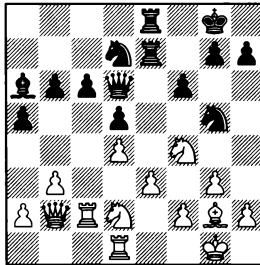
Without dark-squared bishops, the hanging pawns lose most of their dynamic potential. Moreover, the c5-pawn is rather weak: 21...c5 22. dxc5 bxc5 23. ♖e1 ♖b6 24. ♖a3†.

22.♖c2 ♜ce8 23.♙e2 ♘e4
24.♙f4 a5 25.♙d3 f6



I'm beginning to rip dividends from my manoeuvres. Black's last move weakens the d5-g8 diagonal and the kingside as a whole. It also takes away the f6-square from the knight.

26.♙d2 ♙g5 27.♜b2 ♜a6 28.♙f4



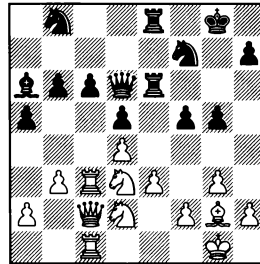
28...♙f7

Black should avoid exchanges of knights as they are his only hope for counterplay. For instance, 28...♙e4 29.♞dc1 ♜c8 30.♙xe4 dxe4 31.♜h3 g6 32.a3 f5 33.b4 sets up d4-d5 and White's advantage becomes tangible.

29.♞dc1 ♙b8 30.♞c3 g5

It is becoming difficult for Black to wait any more. After 30...g6 31.♜c2 ♙g7 32.h4 ♙d8, everything is ready for 33.e4, e.g. 33...♙e6 34.♙e6+ ♜xe6 35.exd5 ♜e1+ 36.♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 37.♙h2 ♜e2 38.♜c1 cxd5 39.♞c7+±.

31.♙d3 f5 32.♜c2 ♜e6?!



Finally a chance to bust the enemy's centre has shown up! 32...f4 33.exf4 ♜xd3 34.♜xd3 gxf4 35.♙f3 was still playable although the e-file would be of no real use to Black.

Now the game ends in a few moves:

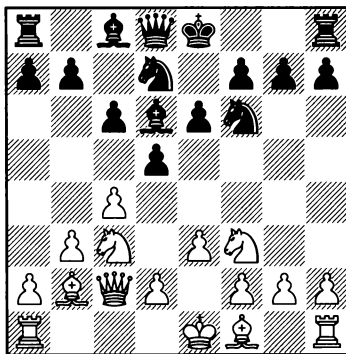
33.♙e5! ♙xe5 34.dxe5 ♜d8 (or 34...♜xe5 35.♙f3 ♜f6 36.♙d4 ♜d6 37.♙xc6±) 35.♙f3 ♜f8 36.♙d4 ♜xe5 37.♜xc6! f4 (37...♙xc6 38.♙xc6 ♜c7 39.♜b2! ♜fe8 40.♙b4 ♜b7 41.♙xa6 ♜xa6 42.f4 ♜5e6 43.♜xd5 is a mate in 16, according to the computer.)

38.♞c7

1-0

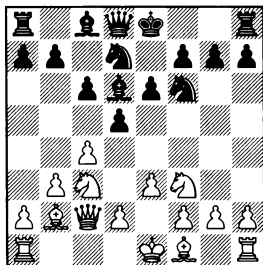
Anti-Meran II

1. ♘f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6 5. b3 ♘bd7
6. ♙c2 ♙d6 7. ♙b2



Main Ideas

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♠f6 4.♠c3
e6 5.b3 ♠bd7 6.♖c2 ♠d6 7.♗b2



This part is the core of my book. It is mostly based on my own research on the bayonet attack with ♠g1 followed up by g4.

The move 8.♠g1!? (after 7...0-0), has been introduced in 2002 and has not accumulated enough practice yet. It scores very well according to my database, achieving 67%. Naturally, draws are seldom seen in such strategically unbalanced games.

I would like to stress strongly that this sharp plan is not my weapon of choice or at least it is not my only repertoire. At the recent European team championship I chose the reliable and flexible ♠e2, connected with short castling. It is a perfect option if you want to avoid risk. I analyse it extensively in part 6. Perhaps it is best to vary both

plans depending on the opponent and the tournament situation.

If you do opt for ♠g1, though, you must play to the utmost of your tactical abilities. The next 10 moves are likely to decide the game. This is even more valid for your opponents though. Black often tries to follow recipes which are familiar from the calmer variations, and get crushed right in the opening. I hope that my book will help you contribute your own share of nice miniatures.

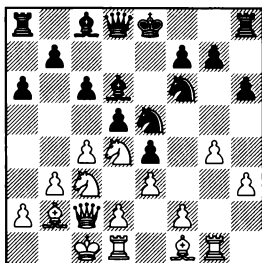
Let's divide Black's defensive plans into two groups: with an early castling and without it. Another major distinction is whether Black plays ...a6, or pushes ...e5 without this preparation. That leads to different pawn structures.

1. Black does not castle and restricts g5 by ...h6:

7...a6 8.♠g1!? e5 (or 8...♖e7 9.g4 h6 10.♠e2! followed by h4) **9.g4 h6** (9...e4 10.g5). Now we should not hurry to open the h-file to the enemy rook. Instead, we can complete development and strike in the centre:

10.0-0-0! e4 11.♠d4 ♠e5 12.h3

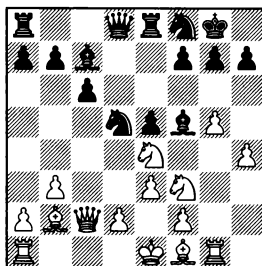
4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♝c2 ♚d6 7.♙b2



**12...b5 (12...0-0 13.d3!) 13.d3!
exd3 14.♙xd3 bxc4 15.♙e2! 0-0
16.f4±.**

2. Black plays ...e5 without ...a6.

**7...0-0 8.♝g1 e5 9.cxd5
♞xd5 (9...cxd5 10.♞b5 ♙b8 11.♝c1)
10.♞e4 ♙c7 11.g4! ♝e8 12.g5
♞f8 13.h4 ♙f5**



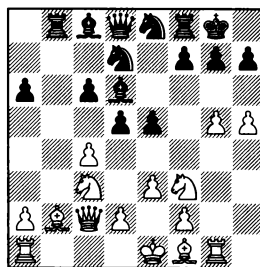
White owns the initiative. After 14.a3 ♙g6, one way or another, he will play h4-h5, even if he would have to trade light-squared bish-ops. Then he should consider both g5-g6 or h5-h6. See the detailed commentaries of **game 8 Wojtaszek-Krysztofiak**, Leba 2004.

3. Black plays ...e5 after ...a6.

7...0-0 8.♝g1 a6

This move has not been tried yet. It looks very consistent to me so I have spent a lot of time on it.

**9.g4 b5 10.g5 ♞e8 11.h4! e5
12.h5 bxc4 13.bxc4 ♝b8!**



In this extremely sharp position White should take on d5 – not to win a pawn, but to point two more pieces at the black king.

**14.cxd5! cxd5 15.♞xd5 ♙b7
16.♙c4!**

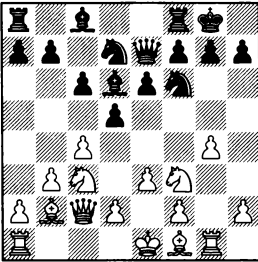
I'm afraid, you should memorise the rest of my analysis from "Step by Step", line B. Both sides have to follow a narrow path which reaches a position where White retains the initiative.

4. Black does not commit himself with pawn moves in the centre.

7...0-0 8.♝g1 ♝e7 9.g4!?

When Black avoids action in the centre, White can also spend a tempo on development by 9.♙e2!?

See **game 9 Halkias-Haznedaroglu**, Antalya 2001.

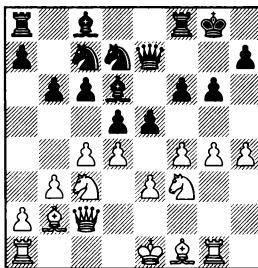


Black has delayed ...e6-e5, but he may be never capable of achieving it anymore as White can successfully contest the dark squares:

a) 9...♙a3?! 10.g5 ♖e8 11.♙xa3 ♜xa3 12.h4 f5 13.gxf6 ♜dxf6 14.♜e5 ♜d6 15.f4±, Polak-Petr, Ostrava 2010.

b) 9...♜e5?! 10.♜xe5 ♙xe5 11.g5 ♜d7 12.f4.

c) 9...♜e8!? 10.h4 b6 12.♜g5 g6 13.f4 f6 14.♜f3 e5



White's threats are more substantial after 15.dxe5.

5. Black plays ...b6.

The bayonet attack is effective against the fianchetto in all its set-

tings and move orders. This is due to the fact that ...b6 does not address in any way the critical square e5 and the fight for the centre. That gives White a free hand on the kingside.

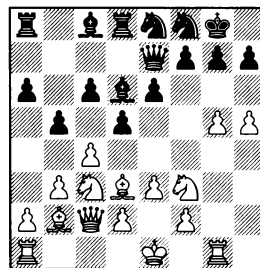
Of course, we can also exchange on d5 and enjoy a small, but lasting edge as shown in other parts of the book.

Typical Tactical Motifs

This part deals with very unbalanced positions where tactical vigilance is often decisive. The following attacking guide should help you sniff out possible blows from afar.

If Black does not bar the main diagonal by ...e5, he often becomes victim of a ♙-♜ battery:

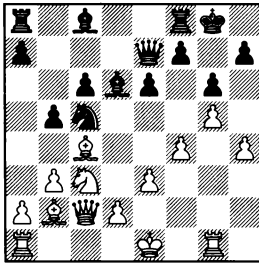
Analysis



1.h6! g6 2.cxd5 cxd5 3.♜xd5! exd5 4.♜c3+-.

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.♟b2

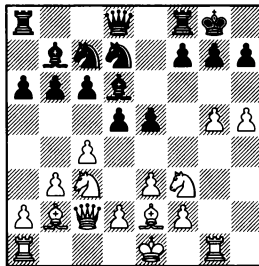
**Nogueiras–Kirk
Dos Hermanas 2003**



17.b4! ♞a6 18.♞e4+–.

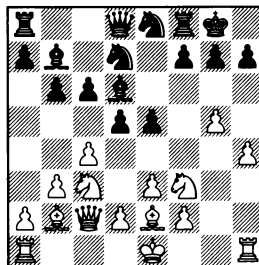
Sometimes disaster reaches
Black on both neighbour diagonals:

**Petkov–Friedrich
Cesenatico 2010**



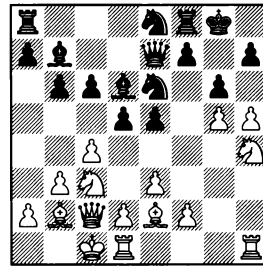
14.♟d3! e4 (or 14...g6 15.hxg6
fxg6 16.♟xg6 ♞xf3 17.♟xh7+ ♜f8
18.♟f5±) 15.♞xe4! dxe4 16.♟xe4+–.

**Chadaev–Potapov
Russian ch. 2011**



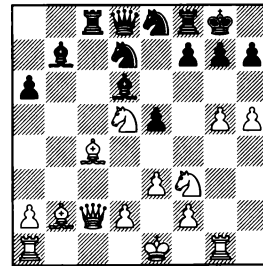
White continued with 12.h5
b5? and got a big advantage after
13.♟d3! e4 14.♞xe4 dxe4 15.♟xe4.
However, Black could have pre-
vented the debacle with 12...e4. So
the best setting of White's idea is
12.♟d3! e4 13.♞xe4 dxe4 14.♟xe4
g6 15.h5!.

Another interesting position
arises if in the last variation Black
chooses 12...g6. White follows
up with 13.h5 ♞c5 14.♟e2 ♞e6
15.0-0-0 ♞e7 16.♞h4.



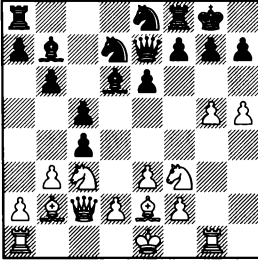
White will throw into the fire f2-
f4 to crack enemy's defence.

If a white knight can reach f6
(from d5 or, more often, from e4),
we should always be on the alert to
spot possible tactics based on the
opening of the g-file:

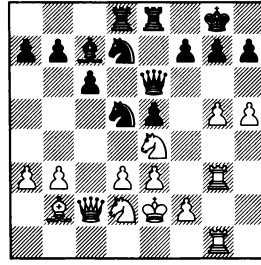


1.♞f6+! gxf6 2.g6!!, with an at-
tack.

Here is another example:



14.♘e4!! (14.bxc4 f5! is unclear)
 14...cxb3 15.axb3. White has a
 strong initiative. For instance: 15...
 ♙c7 16.♘f6+ ♘dxf6 17.gxf6 ♘xf6
 18.♚c3 ♙d8 19.♙a4!



We see the pawn structure
 that arises after an early ...e5. The
 threats of ♘f6+ or g5-g6 restrain
 Black's counterplay. White can fur-
 ther increase his striking power by
 bringing the queen to the kingside
 after ♔f1, ♚d1-f3.

Points to remember:

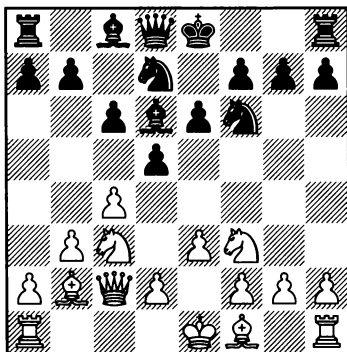
If Black plays ...e5 without ...a6, we take on d5 and install a powerful knight on e4.

If Black plays ...e5 after...a6, we do not take on d5 and proceed with our attack on the kingside with ♙g1.

If Black restricts g5 by ...h6, we complete development, castle long and then play in the centre or follow up with h4.

Step by Step

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♠c3
e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♚c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2



7...0-0

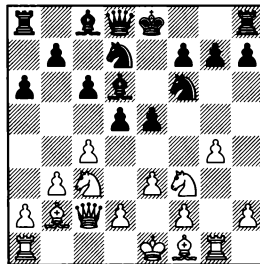
Black can try to take the sting out of the bayonet attack g2-g4 by delaying castling, but his king would be even more vulnerable in the centre:

a) 7...a6 8.♞g1!?

The calmer alternative 8.d4 0-0 9.♙e2 is examined in Part 6/line C. White has a tiny edge in this set-up without any risks.

8...e5 (8...0-0 9.g4 b5 transposes to the main line) 9.g4

It is amazing to watch how poorly Black performs in practice versus this plan.



The game Hauchard-Relange, Nantes 1993, continued 9...d4?! 10.exd4 exd4 11.♠xd4 ♘e5 12.♙e2 ♙xg4 13.f4, when Blacks is close to losing as 13...♙a3 14.♠a4± costs a piece.

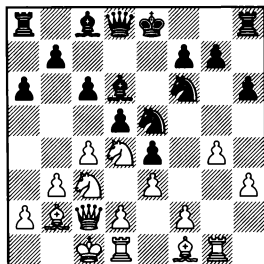
9...e4 looks more consistent. Perhaps White should choose 10.g5 exf3 11.gxf6 ♘xf6 12.♞xg7± because 10.♠d4 ♘e5 11.g5 ♘fg4 12.cxd5 c5 13.♚xe4 cxd4 (13...f5? 14.♠xf5 0-0 15.♠h6+ gxh6 16.f4+-) 14.exd4 0-0 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.0-0-0 ♞e8± is not too clear.

The engines like:

9...h6. This effectively discourages further advancing with 10.h4 because opening the h-file would tip the balance in Black's favour: 10...e4 11.♠d4 (11.g5 hxg5 12.hxg5 exf3 13.gxf6 ♘xf6 14.♞xg7 ♙e6∞) 11...♘e5 12.g5 hxg5 13.hxg5 ♘fg4 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♠xd5 ♞h2 16.♠c3 ♘d3+ 17.♙xd3 exd3 18.♚xd3 ♘xf2

19.♖c2 ♖h3 20.♗f1 ♜xg5. However, 9...h6 weakens the kingside and makes future castling risky for Black. White can complete development with:

10.0-0! e4 11.♞d4 ♞e5 12.h3 and hit in the centre, for example:



12...b5 (12...0-0 13.d3! exd3 14.♙xd3 bxc4 15.♙e2! 0-0 16.f4 ♞g6 17.♙b1. Everything is ready for a decisive attack.

b) 7...♗e7 is a flexible move that might transpose to the quite line of Part 6 after 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0. There are some lines of independent significance, where White combines 8.♙e2 with 9.♗g1. See **game 9 Halkias-Haznedaroglu**, Antalya 2001. White can also reveal his aggressive plans immediately:

8.♗g1 a6 9.g4 h6 10.♙e2

Black has not castled yet so it is good to make a developing move instead of h4.

10...b5

The thematic 10...e5 11.h4 dxc4 12.bxc4 g6 13.g5 hxg5 14.hxg5 ♞h5 15.♞e4 was much better for White in Simonian-Semenova, Voronezh

2010. The text, however, weakens the c6 square.

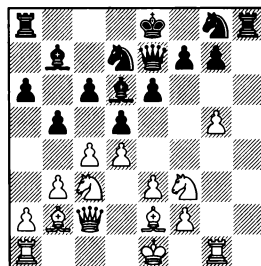
11.h4 ♙b7

11...b4 12.♞a4 ♗g8 13.g5 hxg5 14.hxg5± ♞e4 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♖c6 ♗b8 17.♙xa6 cost Black a pawn in Dobrov-Menadue, Caerleon 2007.

12.g5 hxg5 13.hxg5 ♞g8.

The game Bogner-Ris, Neuhausen 2007, continued here with 14.0-0-0±, but this might not be the best option. If Black opens the b-file, White should be able to contest it with ♗b1. Therefore,

14.d4! looks preferable:



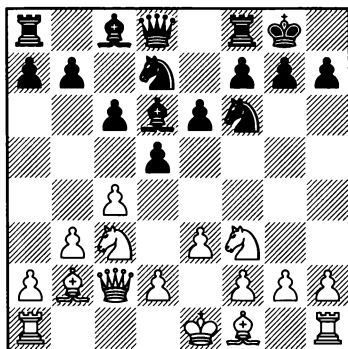
White has a space advantage and the better pieces:

14...e5 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.dxe5 ♞xe5 17.♗d2 ♗d8 18.0-0-0± or 14...bxc4 15.bxc4 ♗b8 16.♗b1 ♞f8 17.♞a4 ♗e8 18.♞c5 (or 18.c5 ♙c7 19.♞d2 ♞e7 20.♗h1±) 18...♙c8 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.♞xa6±.

The above examples show that White develops a strong initiative very quickly. Perhaps Black should seriously think about preventing g2-g4 by 9.♗g1 h5 10.h3 h4!?

Now let us return to 7...0-0.

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2



White is now facing a fateful choice: 8.♞g1!? or the more conventional 8.♙e2, which is the subject of Part 6.

8.♞g1!?

The inclusion of 8.♙e2 ♞e8 9.♞g1 is probably in Black's favour. After 9...e5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘e4 ♘f6 (the rook defends the e5-pawn!) 12.♘xd6 ♞xd6 13.a3 ♙d7 Black stands solidly in the centre.

After 8.♞g1, main branches are:
A. 8...♞e7; B. 8...a6; C. 8...e5

A minor alternative is 8...♘e5 9.♘xe5 ♙xe5 10.g4! (10.f4 ♙c7 11.0-0-0 e5∞) 10...♙xh2 11.♞g2 ♙c7 12.g5 ♘e8 13.♙d3 g6 14.0-0-0. White only needs to put in ♞h1 to target all his pieces at the opponent's king.

A. 8...♞e7 9.g4!?

I have examined the position after 9.♙e2!? under the move order

7...♞e7 8.♙e2 0-0 9.♞g1 earlier in this chapter.

9...♘e8!?

Houdini and Rybka like this move. I have seen in practice only:

a) 9...♙a3?!. The exchange of this bishop is positionally unsound as now Black's dark squares are too weak: 10.g5 ♘e8 11.♙xa3 ♞xa3 12.h4 f5 13.gxf6 ♘dxf6 14.♘e5 ♞d6 15.f4 d4 16.♘e4 ♘xe4 17.♞xe4 ♘f6 18.♞g2±, Polak-Petr, Ostrava 2010.

b) 9...♘e5?! 10.♘xe5 ♙xe5 11.g5 ♘d7 12.f4 ♙d6 13.♙d3 g6 14.h4 ♘c5 15.♙e2 dxc4 16.♙xc4 b5 17.b4 ♘a6 18.♘e4+–, Nogueiras-Kirk, Dos Hermanas 2003.

c) 9...♞d8 10.g5 ♘e8 11.h4 a6 12.h5 b5, Edouard-Guliyev, Livry Gargan 2009, when 13.♙d3 g6 (13...♘f8 14.h6 g6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♘xd5±) 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.♙xg6 fxg6 17.♘xd5± would have been crushing.

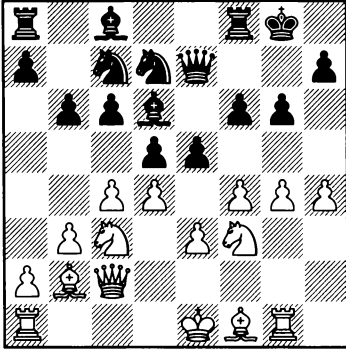
10.h4

At first I analysed 10.0-0-0 ♘c7 11.d4 b6 12.♙d3 g6 13.♙b1, but Black generates considerable counterplay on the queenside: 13...a5 14.h4 (14.e4 dxc4 15.bxc4 e5; 14.cxd5∞) 14...♘a6 15.♙e2 ♙b7 16.h5 a4 17.♘xa4 ♘b4 18.♞d2 dxc4 19.♙xc4 b5 20.♘c5∞. Perhaps it is safer to leave the king at e1. In the ensuing complications I was intrigued by the position after:

10...♖c7 11.d4

It is time to pay attention to the centre. It is unclear how to proceed after 11.♖e2 e5 12.♖g3 g6 13.h5 b5.

11...b6 12.♖g5 g6 13.f4 f6
14.♖f3 e5



Despite the seemingly dangerous attack of Black, White's threats are more substantial. Here are some crazy variations:

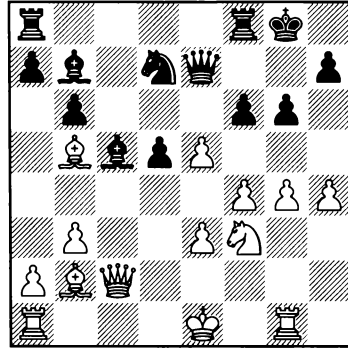
15.dxe5 ♖c5 (15...fxe5 16.0-0-0 exf4 17.cxd5 and 17...♞xe3+ fails to 18.♗b1+—) 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.♗b5 ♗xb5

17...♗e6 18.♞d2 ♖b7 19.0-0-0 fxe5 is also possible, but now White takes over the initiative with 20.f5 ♖b4 (20...♗g7 21.♗b1) 21.♞h2 a6 22.fxe6 ♞xe6 23.♗g5 ♞e7 24.♗b1 axb5 25.♖xb5†.

18.♖xb5 ♖b7

Or 18...♖xe3 19.♖c6 ♞b8 20.♖xd5+ ♗h8 21.♗f1 fxe5 22.fxe5

♖b7 23.♖xb7 ♞xb7 24.♞e4 ♞bb8 25.♗g2! ♖xg1 26.♞xg1±.



19.♖xd7!

A solid positional solution. 19.♞e2 fxe5 20.♖xd7 exf4 21.♖b5 a6 22.♖d3 wins a piece, but completely abandons the initiative to the enemy: 22...♞ae8 23.♞g2 (23.♞f1 ♞xe3 24.♗d1 ♖c8 25.♖c1 ♞xe2+ 26.♖xe2 ♖xg4 27.♖xa6 ♖h3=; 23.h5 ♞xe3 24.♗d1 ♞xe2+ 25.♖xe2 ♖xg1 26.♗xg1 d4∞ 27.♖c4+ ♗g7 28.♖xd4+ ♗h6 29.♖xb6) 23...♖b4+ 24.♗f1 fxe3 25.♗g1 ♞f4±.

19...♞xd7 20.♖d4 ♖xd4 21.exd4 ♞e7 22.♞d2 fxe5 23.♗xe5 ♞xh4+ 24.♗d1 ♞ac8 25.♞c1

The e5-knight is ruling over the board, for instance, 25...♖a6 26.f5±.

B. 8...a6

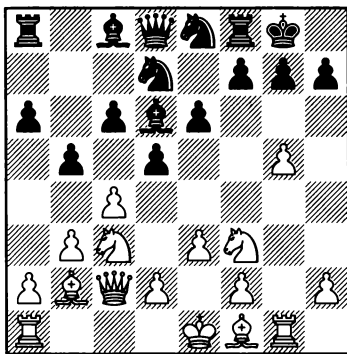
This move has not been tried in practice yet, but it is very consistent. Black is aiming to open the

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2

queenside with ...b7-b5xc4, so long castling becomes quite problematic for White. His next two moves are clear:

9.g4 b5 10.g5 ♟e8,

but now he must make a major decision.



Black is ready to play ...e5, but 11.d4 bxc4 12.bxc4 ♞b8! is not too inspiring. The threat of ...dxc4 followed by ...c5 is unpleasant with White's king stuck in the centre! Therefore, White should probably go for a head-on attack with:

11.h4! e5

Every tempo is precious. 11...♙b7 12.h5 e5 13.♙d3! e4 14.♟xe4 smashes Black's defence.

12.h5

Now 12.♙d3 fails to 12...f5! 13.♙xf5 ♞xf5 14.♞xf5 ♟c5.

12...bxc4 13.bxc4 ♞b8!

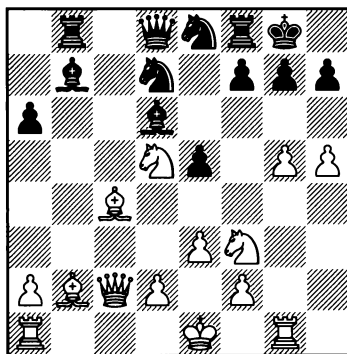
Black has no time for 13...♟c7 due to 14.♟a4, threatening to win the e5-pawn after c4-c5. Following 14...e4 15.h6! g6 16.♞c3 f6 17.gxf6 ♞xf6 18.c5 ♙f8 19.♟e5, White fulfils all his opening aims.

14.cxd5!

White has to take the pawn because 14.♞b1 ♟c7 15.♙d3!? f5! (15...e4 16.♟xe4 dxe4 17.♙xe4+-; 15...g6 16.cxd5 cxd5 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.♙xg6 ♞xf3 19.♙xh7+ ♟f8 20.♞g6) 16.♙xf5 ♞xf5 17.♞xf5 ♟c5 18.♞c2 e4 19.♟h4 ♟d3+ 20.♟e2 a5 is awful for him.

The immediate 14.♙d3 gives Black the opportunity to show the idea of his previous move: 14...f5!? (or 14...e4 15.♟xe4 dxe4 16.♙xe4 f5 17.♙xc6 ♟c5 18.♙d5+ ♙e6 19.♙xe6+ ♟xe6 20.h6 g6 21.♞c3 ♞xb2!) 15.cxd5 e4 16.♟xe4 fxe4 17.♙xe4 ♞xb2! 18.♞xb2 ♟c5, with an initiative.

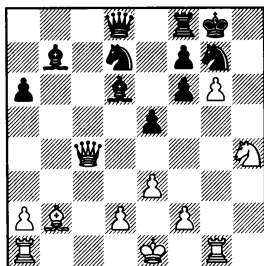
14...cxd5 15.♟xd5 ♙b7 16.♙c4!



It looks like White's pieces are hanging, but the force (meaning

tactics!) is with him. Black must play very carefully to avoid the numerous tactical mines which could explode at any moment. For instance:

16...♖c8 looks normal, but then follows 17.♔f6+! gxf6 (17...♔dxf6 18.gxf6 ♖xf6 19.♔g5+-) 18.g6!! ♖xc4 (18...♔g7 19.♔h4) 19.♖xc4 hxg6 20.hxg6 ♔g7 21.♔h4! and White's initiative is undisputable.



The material is about balanced, but the safer king's position and piece activity tip the scales in White's favour:

a) 21...♔b6 22.♖g4 ♕c8 23.♖e4 ♖e8 24.a4!. While Black is tied down with the defence of his king, White can improve on the opposite wing. 24...a5 (24...♕d7 25.a5 ♔c8 26.gxf7+ ♖xf7 27.♔f5 ♕xf5 28.♖xf5±) 25.♕c3 ♕e6 26.♕xa5 ♔d5 27.gxf7+ ♖xf7 28.♖b1 ♖a8 29.♖h1!! ♔f8 30.♔g6+ ♔e8 31.♖b5±.

b) 21...♖c7 22.gxf7+ ♖xf7 23.♖xc7 ♕xc7 24.♖c1 ♕b8 25.f3 ♔h7 26.♖h1 ♔g8 27.♕a3±.

16...♔c7 is not any better due to 17.♔f6+ gxf6 18.♖f5!! ♔h8 19.♕d3 e4 20.gxf6 ♖g8 21.♖g7.

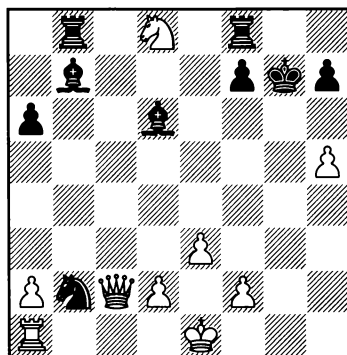
Perhaps the most accurate answer is:

16...♔b6 17.♔f6+! gxf6 18.gxf6+ ♔h8 19.♔xe5 ♔xc4

After 19...♕xe5 20.♕xe5 ♔d6, White should probably opt for the slightly better endgame 21.♕xd6 ♖xf6 22.♖c3 ♖xc3 23.dxc3 ♔xc4 24.♕xb8 ♖xb8 25.♖b1 ♔e5 26.♖g3 ♔d3+ 27.♔e2 ♔c5 28.♖gg1 since 21.♖g7, amazingly, is not winning – 21...♕e4 22.♕d3 ♖c8 23.♖b1 ♖e8 24.♕xd6 ♖xf6 25.h6 (25.♖xf7 ♖xf7 26.♕xe4 ♖f6 27.♕b4 ♖xe4 28.♖xe4 ♖xa1+ 29.♔e2=) 25...♕g6=.

20.♖g7 ♔xg7 21.fxg7+ ♔xg7 22.♔c6+ ♔xb2 23.♔xd8

A critical position. I'm sure that computers should be able to defend it, but over the board Black's task is much more difficult. His king is exposed and the raving queen is able to create tons of threats. Generally, White aims to trade a pair of rooks in order to hamper the coordination of the enemy pieces. Look at this variation:



4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♝bd7 6.♞c2 ♞d6 7.♞b2

23...♞fxd8 24.♞xb2+ f6 25.♞c2 ♞e7 (25...♞bc8? 26.h6+ ♜xh6 27.♞b2) 26.♞b1 ♞d5 27.♞xb8 ♞xb8 28.♞f5 ♞xa2 29.h6+ ♜h8 30.♞d7 ♞f8 31.♞c6 ♞xh6 32.♞xf6+ ♞g7 33.♞xa6 ♞g8 34.f4±. Black must keep his pieces together in order to avoid double attacks, but that allows White to start rolling his pawns.

23...♞a8 24.♞b1 ♞fxd8 25.♞xb2 ♞bc8 26.♞f5 h6 27.♞c2 ♞b8 28.♞c4

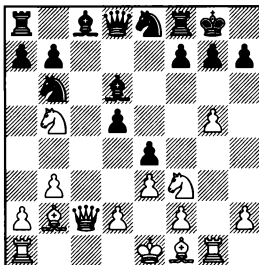
White has more chances to win than Black to draw here.

C. 8...e5 9.cxd5 ♜xd5

White will get an invasion square on c7 after:

9...cxd5 10.♜b5

The thematic 10.g4 also deserves attention, for example, 10...♜b6 11.g5 ♜e8 12.♜b5 e4

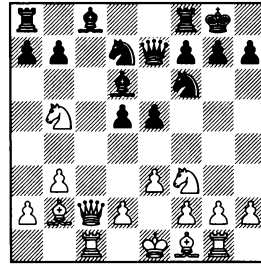


13.♜xd6 (13.♜fd4 ♞e7 14.h4 ♞d7) 13...♞xd6 14.♜d4 (14.♜e5 ♞f5 15.♞c1 ♞c8 16.♞d1 ♞xc1 17.♞xc1 ♜c7 18.♞c3 ♜e6±) 14...♞d7 15.f4

♞c8 16.♞d1, with active pieces. The knight move aims to gain the bishop pair advantage.

10...♞b8

The assessment of 10...♞e7 depends on the sharp variation 11.♞c1.



a) 11...e4 12.♜fd4 ♞xh2 13.♞h1 ♞e5 14.f4 (14.♞a3±) 14...exf3 15.gxf3±.

b) 11...d4 12.♜xd6 ♞xd6 13.exd4 exd4 14.♞c7 ♞e6+ 15.♜d1. Despite the awkward placement of White's king in the centre, the rest of his pieces are so active that Black cannot avoid simplification. For example: 15...♜e4 16.♞xd4 ♜df6 17.♞c4 ♞f5 18.♞e5±.

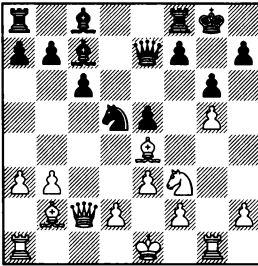
c) 11...♜e8 12.♜xd6 ♞xd6 13.g4 f6 14.g5 (or even 14.♜h4 ♜b6 15.♞c5±) 14...e4 15.gxf6 ♜dxf6 16.♜e5 ♞f5 17.♞c5±.

11.♞c1 e4 12.♜fd4 ♞xh2 (12...♜e5 13.♜c7 ♜d3+ 14.♞xd3 exd3 15.♞c5 ♞xc7 16.♞xc7 ♞d7 17.f3±) 13.♞h1. White has an overwhelming advantage for only one pawn. The game Lushenkov-Demianjuk, Minsk 2008, went on 13...♞e5 14.f4 exf3 15.gxf3 a6 16.♜c7 ♞xc7 17.♞xc7±.

10. ♖e4 ♗c7!

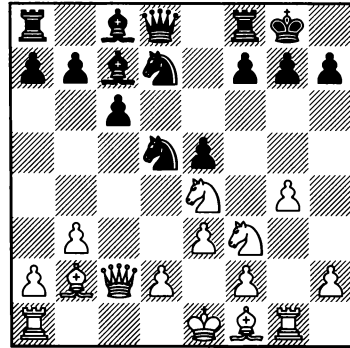
In the event of 10... ♜e7, White should not hurry to eat the passive bishop on d6. After 11. ♖xd6 ♜xd6 12. a3 ♜e8 13. d3 c5 14. ♗e2 b6 15. g4 ♗b7 16. h4 a5 17. g5 a4 18. h5 b5 19. g6 fxg6 20. hxg6 h6, Bocharov-Belozarov, Tomsk 2009, his play on the kingside reached an impasse. Perhaps he should prevent ...f7-f5 by 11. g4!?

This idea has been realized in practice with the insertion of 11. a3 ♗c7 12. g4. The game Iturrizaga-Sharapov, Dubai 2010 went 12... ♖f6 13. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 14. ♗d3 g6 15. ♗e4 ♜e7 16. g5↑



Undoubtedly, White owns the initiative, so I can understand Black's impatient next move, which turned out to be a blunder:

16... f5? 17. gxf6 ♖xf6 18. ♗xg6 hxg6 19. ♜xg6+ ♗h8 20. ♖xe5 ♜h7 21. ♖f7+ 1-0.

11. g4

This is a model position for the bayonet attack. It is practically untested as I found only 2 games in my database.

White will probably leave his king in the centre. His next moves are g4-g5, h2-h4-h5. Then he should reevaluate the situation depending on the opponent's moves. Black's play is not so clear. 11... ♖b4 12. ♜c4 a5 does not change much as after 13. a3 ♖b6 14. ♜c3 ♖d4d5 15. ♜c2, Black will probably have to play 15... ♜e8 anyway. Then 16. ♗d3 g6 17. g5, followed by h2-h4-h5 is pleasant for White. Thus Black's most natural move remains:

11... ♜e8 12. g5 ♖f8 13. h4 ♗f5

White has some initiative. See the detailed annotations of **game 8 Wojtaszek-Krysztofciak, Leba 2004.**

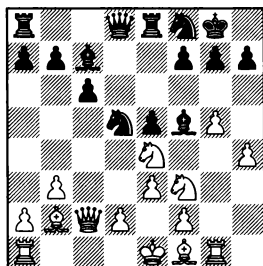
Complete Games

8. Wojtaszek–Krysztofiak POL-ch U18 Leba 2004

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.b3 ♘f6
4.♙b2 c6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♖c2 ♙d6
7.♘c3 0-0 8.♗g1 e5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5
10.♘e4 ♙c7 11.g4 ♗e8

Black's knight cannot land on the d3-square: 11...♘b4 12.♖c4 a5 13.a3 ♘b6 14.♖c3 ♘4d5 15.♖c2.

12.g5 ♘f8 13.h4 ♙f5



14.a3!?

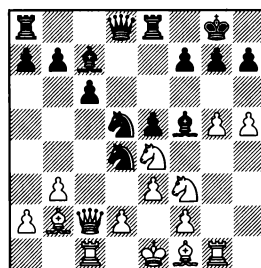
The pawn structure is deceptive. One might argue that White plays the Sicilian with colours reversed, but the character of position is in fact completely different. White will try to keep as low as possible on the queenside in order to avoid weaknesses. He will push a3 to res-

trict the d5-knight, but b4 is out of his plans because the left flank could shelter his king after an eventual castling. An essential point in White's attack is h4-h5 and it seems sensible to push it without any delay:

14.h5. Then mundane continuations like 14...♖e7 15.a3 ♗ad8 would favour White – 16.♙d3 ♖h8 17.♘h4 ♙c8 18.0-0-0±.

The only way to refute 14.h5 would be an attack in the centre by:

14...♘e6! 15.♗c1 (threatening 16.♘f6+) 15...♘d4



White has two possible captures, but Black retains counterplay either way:

a) 16.♘xd4 exd4 17.♘f6+ ♘xf6 18.♖xf5 dxe3 19.fxe3 ♘e4 (19...♘xh5? 20.♙c4 ♗f8 21.g6!+-) 20.♗c2 (20.♗g2 ♘g3 21.♖f3 ♘xf1 22.♗f2

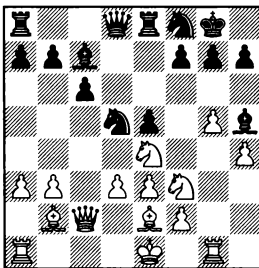
♖d7 23.♙xf1 ♜e6 24.♞c5 ♞ae8
25.♟f5 ♞8e7∞) 20...♙g3 21.♟f3
♙xf1 22.♞xf1 ♖d7 23.h6 ♙e5∞.

b) 16.♙xd4 exd4 17.♙f6+ ♙xf6
18.♟xf5 ♙xh5 (18...♙d5 19.g6 fxg6
20.hxg6 dxe3 21.fxe3 h6 22.♙c4†)
19.♙c4 g6 20.♟xf7+ ♙h8 21.♙e2 ♟f8
22.♟c4 ♙b6 23.♟g4 ♖d7 24.♙xd4
♙f4 25.♙c2 ♙xe2 26.♟xe2∞.

Wojtaszek prepares to castle and that is a reasonable choice. Now 14...♙e6 would not be dangerous in view of 15.0-0-0. Black would not be able to hold the blockade on h5 anyway.

14...♙g6 15.d3 f5

This looks a bit impatient. I do believe that Black cannot survive with a passive defence against the beast on e4, and sooner or later he would be forced to move the f-pawn. However, he should have waited for a better moment, for instance: 15...♙h5 16.♙e2

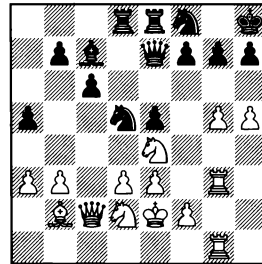


a) 16...♙g6 17.♞h1 a5 18.♙g3 ♙g4
19.h5. The blockade is removed and White easily redeploys his pieces for the attack: 19...♙f8 20.♙e4 ♙e6
21.♞d1 ♟e7 22.♙h4 ♙xe2 23.♙f5

♖d8 24.♙xe2 ♖d7 25.♙h4 ♞ad8
26.♙f3 ♟e7 27.♞dg1.

b) 16...a5 17.♙h2 ♙xe2 18.♙xe2
♙d7 19.♟g3 ♟e7 20.h5 ♟e6 21.♙f3
♟f5 22.♞ag1.

c) 16...♟e7 17.♙fd2 ♙xe2
18.♙xe2 ♞ad8 19.h5 a5 20.♟g3 ♙h8
21.♞ag1



Now Black can wait with:

c1) 21...♙e6 22.♙f3 ♙f8 (Again, 22...f5 does not fully equalise. After 23.gxf6 gxf6 24.♙e1 ♟g8 25.♙h4 ♞xg3 26.♞xg3 ♟g8 27.♞xg8+ ♙xg8 28.♟e2, White is still better, even without rooks.) Perhaps White can try to shift his queen to the kingside with 23.♙f1, ♟e2, ♙h4.

C2) 21...♟e6 22.♙f3 ♖d7 23.♙f1 (23.g6!? fxg6 24.hxg6 h6 25.♞h1†) 23...b6 24.♟e2 c5 25.g6 fxg6 26.hxg6 ♙xg6 (26...h6 27.♙fg5) 27.♙fg5 ♙f8 28.♟h5 g6 29.♟h6 ♟g7 30.♟h4∞.

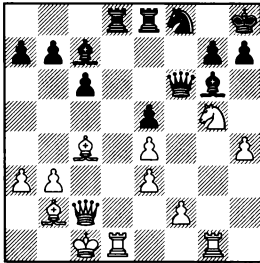
The early breakthrough in the game made weaknesses and gave White a free hand on the kingside:

**16.gxf6 ♙xf6 17.0-0-0 ♙xe4
18.dxe4 ♟f6 19.♙g5 ♞ad8**

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♜c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2

19...h6 is not too helpful due to 20.f4.

20.♙c4+ ♖h8



21.♞xd8

This exchange would have been justified only if it were winning by force. White's rooks are very active and he should have preserved both of them by 21.♞df1! b5 22.♙e2 ♘e6 23.f4±.

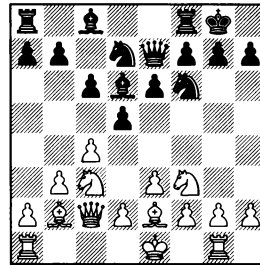
21...♞xd8 22.f4 ♜e7?

Loses by force. From f6 the queen defends the critical g7-square. I could not find anything decisive after 22...h6 23.♘f3 ♘d7 24.♙e2 ♙b6 (24...♙h7 25.♖b1 ♜e7) 25.fxe5 ♙xe3+ 26.♖b1 ♜e6 27.♙c4 ♜e8 28.♞e1 ♙f4 29.e6 ♘f6 30.♜g2 ♙h7 (The endgame following 30... b5 31.♙xf6 gxf6 32.♜g4 ♙d6 33.♞g1 bxc4 34.♜xg6 ♜xg6 35.♞xg6 cxb3 36.♖b2± is slightly better, e.g. 36...♞e8 37.♞xf6 ♖g7 38.♞f7+ ♖g6 39.♞f5 ♞xe6 40.h5+ ♖g7 41.e5) 31.♘d4 ♙e5 32.♘f5 ♙xf5 33.exf5 ♙xb2 34.♜xb2±. White stands nicely, but would he be able to make progress?

23.♜g2 (23.h5! ♙xh5 24.♜h2 ♙e8 25.♜g3+--) 23...b5 24.♘f7+ ♖g8 25.f5 bxc4 26.fxg6 hxg6 27.♘xd8 ♜xd8 28.♜c2 cxb3 29.♜xb3+ ♖h7 30.h5 ♜h4? 31.hxg6+ ♘xg6 32.♜d1 1-0

9. Halkias–Haznedaroglu Antalya 2001

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 e6 5.b3 ♙d6 6.♙b2 ♘bd7 7.♜c2 0-0 8.♙e2 ♜e7 9.♞g1



It is hardly the best idea to combine ♙e2 with ♞g1. In many variations the bishop would be much more dangerous on d3. We have also seen examples where Black plays ...e5-e4, ...♘e5. Then White breaks through with d3 when ♙e2 would be a loss of tempo. On the other hand, White might argue that ...♜e7 is not too challenging either, compared to ...a6, followed up by ...b5 or ...e5. As a whole, 9.♞g1 is playable and faces Black with concrete problems. On the contrary, the sac 9.g4 is dubious although in Wojtaszek-Cichocki, Dzwirzyno 2004, White had some compensation after 9...♘xg4 10.♞g1 ♘ge5 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.d4 ♘g6 13.0-0-0

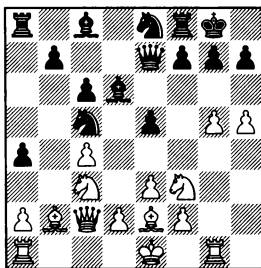
dx c4 14. ♖xc4 e5 15. dxe5 ♖xe5 16. f4 ♖f6 17. ♜de1 ♜e8 18. ♗b1. I prefer to use the g-pawn for repelling the knight from f6 rather than for opening the g-file.

9...e5

After a year, Haznedaroglu improved against Karadeniz, Ankara 2002, with 9....dx c4.

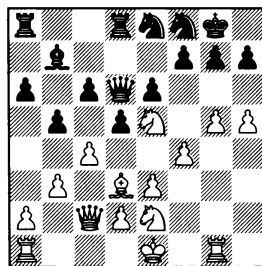
Perhaps he was afraid of 9...e5 10. cxd5 ♖xd5 11. ♖e4. Indeed, 11... ♖c7?! 12. g4 would be similar to our familiar game Wojtaszek-Krysztofia, but trading bishops with 11... ♖a3! 12. g4 ♖xb2 13. ♜xb2 ♜e8 would have been fine for him.

10. bxc4 e5 11. g4 ♖c5 12. g5 ♖e8 13. h4 a5 14. h5 a4



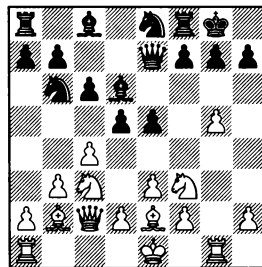
Here White chose 15. ♖e4 and had a good game after 15... ♖xe4, but 15... ♖f5 16. d3 ♖xe4 17. dxe4 ♖b4+ 18. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ would have been awkward. Instead, 15. ♖a3 looks good enough, for instance, 15... ♖e6 16. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 17. g6 hxg6 18. hxg6 ♖c5 19. gxf7+ ♜xf7 20. ♜g6!±. We should never forget that endgames are usually favourable for White in the bayonet attack.

Black has also tested 9... ♖a3, but this exchange is only good if White had already taken on d5. After 10. ♖xa3 ♜xa3 11. g4 ♜d8 12. g5 ♖e8 13. h4 a6 14. h5 b5 15. ♖d3 ♖f8 16. ♖e5 ♖b7 17. ♖e2 ♜d6 18. f4±,



White dominated on the dark squares in Martinez-Fenollar, Tostana 2011.

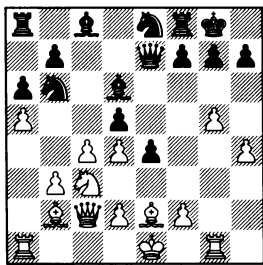
10.g4 ♖b6 11.g5 ♖e8



12.h4

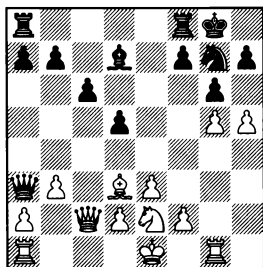
White had a good alternative here – 12. cxd5 ♖xd5 13. ♖e4 ♖f5 14. a3, similarly to Wojtaszek-Krysztofia. I suppose, it would even be the best option as 12. h4 e4! 13. ♖d4 a6 would have been a total mess. The threat of ...c5 forces the answer 14. a4 c5 15. a5 cxd4 16. exd4.

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.♟b2



Now the greedy 16...♞d7? 17.♞xd5 ♞e6 18.0-0-0 would give White a tremendous initiative, but 16...dxc4! 17.axb6 cxb3 18.♞xe4 ♟e6 leads to an “unclear” (meaning unclear to me!) position. In the game, Black erred and gave the opponent control of the centre.

12...♟e6?! 13.c5 ♟xc5 14.♞xe5 ♞d7 15.♞xd7 ♟xd7 16.♟d3 g6 17.h5 ♟a3 18.♟xa3 ♞xa3 19.♞e2 ♞g7



20.♞g3

The exchange of the bishops weakened the dark squares, but it reduced White’s attacking potential. Therefore, White should probably change his strategy and play on a long-term positional advantage with 20.h6 ♞f5 21.♟xf5 ♟xf5 22.♞c3 f6 23.♞g3 ♟g4 24.♞e4±. This variation suggests that Black needs his knight and should keep

it by 20...♞e6 21.♞c3 ♞e7 22.f4 f5 with double-edged play.

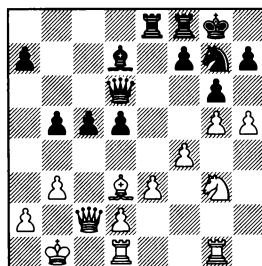
20...♞ae8

Black misses the chance to trade his bishop: 20...♟g4 21.♟e2 ♟xe2 22.♞xe2 ♞ae8 23.f4 ♞e6 24.♞f2∞, and becomes clearly worse.

21.f4 ♞d6 22.0-0-0 c5 23.♞b1?!

This is overly prophylactic. It seems that Halkias was very reluctant to define the pawn structure on the kingside, but it was the best line for him: 23.h6! ♞e6 24.♞b2±.

23...b5



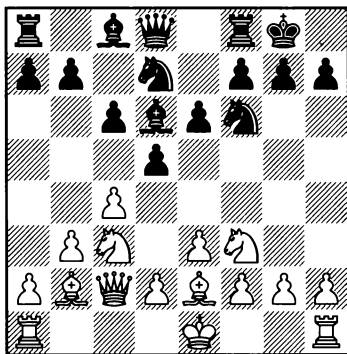
24.♞b2?

24.h6 ♞e6 25.♞b2 c4 26.f5 was an easy win. The text allows 24...♞xh5! 25.♞xh5 gxh5 26.♞h1 ♟g4, with a defensible position. Instead, Black chose the thematic, but losing breakthrough ...f5. That was what Halkias was waiting for so long:

24...f5? 25.gxf6 ♞xf6 26.hxg6 hxg6 27.♞c2 c4 28.♟xg6 cxb3 29.axb3 ♟g4 30.♟xe8 ♟xd1 31.♞xd1 1-0

Anti-Meran III

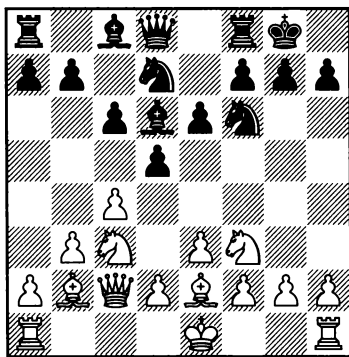
1. ♘f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 e6 5. b3 ♘bd7
6. ♚c2 ♙d6 7. ♙b2 0-0 8. ♙e2



Main Ideas

In this part, I examine an alternative approach based on short castling. Then White plays d4 versus set-ups with ...a6 and often delays this move in the other systems.

1. $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}5$ 2. $\text{c}4$ $\text{c}6$ 3. $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}f6$
 4. $\text{d}c3$ $\text{e}6$ 5. $\text{b}3$ $\text{d}bd7$ 6. $\text{c}c2$ $\text{d}d6$
 7. $\text{b}b2$ 0-0 8. $\text{e}e2!$?



8. $\text{e}e2$ is a flexible development, where White wants to exploit the absence of d2-d4. Play might also transpose to familiar lines from the Anti-Meran, where White is slightly better, but the real clash is deferred for the middlegame. In my opinion, White has enough pure Réti-style alternatives, so I do not see any need to resort to the well trodden

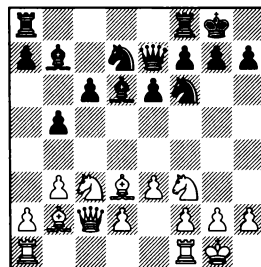
paths. Let us examine Black's main options:

1. Black takes on c4 after 8... $\text{e}e8$ or 8... $\text{c}c7$.

The immediate 8... $\text{d}xc4$ is seldom seen. White can organize an attack leaving his king in the centre: 9. $\text{d}xc4$ $\text{b}5$ 10. $\text{e}e2$ $\text{d}b7$ 11. $\text{d}g5$ $\text{a}6$ 12. $\text{h}4!$? $\text{c}5$ 13. $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}xf3$ 14. gxf3 . Black's defence is not trivial, because he has not any levers to use for counterplay.

8... $\text{e}e8$ or 8... $\text{c}c7$ are more cunning continuations as White has to define his plans. It is a bit late for the bayonet attack, so we have nothing better than castling.

8... $\text{c}c7$ 9.0-0 $\text{d}xc4$ 10. $\text{d}xc4$ $\text{b}5$
 11. $\text{d}d3!$? (11. $\text{e}e2$) 11... $\text{d}b7$

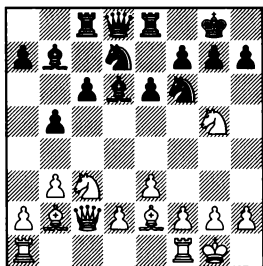


4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

A typical set-up. White can put a knight on e4, obtaining good prospects for a kingside attack:

12.♞g5 h6 13.♞ge4 ♙c7 14.f4.

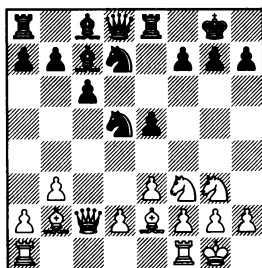
Here is a similar example: 8... ♞e8 dxc4 10.♙xc4 b5 11.♙e2 (There is nothing wrong with 11.♙d3, but I have no practical examples to show.) 11...♙b7 12.♞g5 ♞c8, Petkov-Massanet, Palma 2009.



The game went 13.f4!?, also interesting is 13.♞ce4 ♞xe4 14.♞xe4 ♙b8 15.f4 f5 16.♞g3 g6 17.b4.

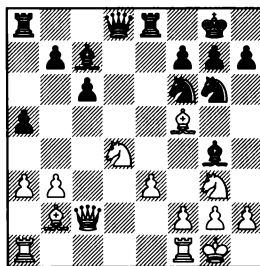
2. Black enters Sicilian structures with colours reversed.

8...♞e8 9.0-0 e5 10.cxd5 ♞xd5 11.♞e4 ♙c7 12.♞g3!



White's general plan is to push d4, possibly after some preparation as in the game Grischuk-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2011:

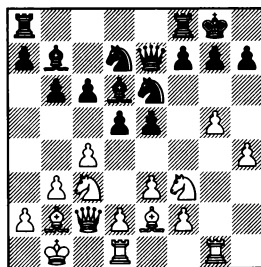
12...♞f8 13.a3 a5 14.d4 ♞g6 15.♙d3! exd4 16.♞xd4 ♙g4 (16... ♙e5 17.♞ae1±) 17.♙f5 ♞f6



White has the upper hand.

3. Black fianchettoes his bishop.

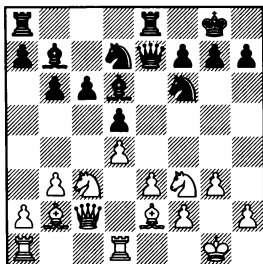
He should do it by following the move order with 8...♞e8 9.0-0 b6, because 8...b6 could be attacked with 9.♞g1!? ♙b7 10.g4 e5 11.g5 ♞e8 12.0-0-0 ♞c7 13.♙b1 ♞e6 14.h4 ♞e7



15.d4! e4 16.♞e5±. White is clearly ahead with his offensive.

8...♞e7 9.0-0 b6?! is also a mistake due to 10.cxd5 exd5 11.♞d4!.

After 8...♖e8 9.0-0 b6, I suggest to define the pawn structure with 10.cxd5 exd5 11.d4 ♖b7 12.♗fd1 ♜e7 13.g3!



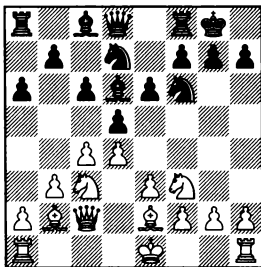
White sets the manoeuvre ♖e2-f1-g2 which would give him a lasting edge due to the possible breakthrough e3-e4 – see Part 4, **game 7 Delchev-Collutiis**, Plovdiv 2010.

Black's only counterplay is 13...c5, but 14.♟b5 ♖b8 15.♖f1 a6 16.♟c3 ♖d6 17.♖g2 is pleasant for White.

4. Black plays ...a6

He can do it on move 8 or after 8...♜e7 9.0-0. Against this particular set-up, we should not wait with d4 any longer.

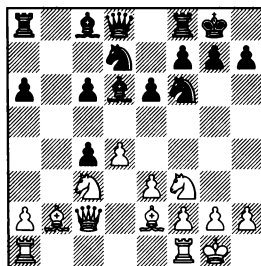
8...a6 9.d4



Black has now two options: 9...b5 or 9...e5. Any delay would be unreasonable since White will favourably open the centre with e4: 9...♜e7 10.0-0 b5 11.e4 e5 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.dxe5 ♟xe5 14.♟xd5±.

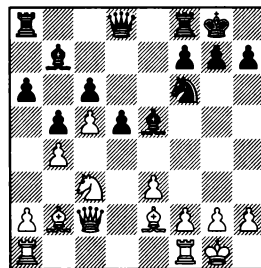
a) 9...b5 10.0-0 ♖b7

It is important to know the variation 10...bxc4 11.bxc4 dxc4



12.♟a4! c5? 13.dxc5 ♟xc5 14.♟xc5 ♖xc5 15.♟g5+–.

11.c5 ♖c7 13.b4 e5 13.dxe5 ♟xe5 14.♟xe5 ♖xe5



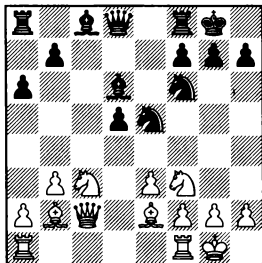
15.f4!

A thematic way to ensure the supremacy of our bishop along the main diagonal. I give three examples on that theme in the “Commented Games” chapter. See for

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♟bd7 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.♟b2 0-0 8.♟e2!?

instance, my **game 12 Delchev-Brunello**, Porto Carras 10.11.2011.

b) 9...e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♟xe5 12.0-0



White players love this position because they have clear play against the isolator. In fact, it is difficult to extract something tangible with a standard manoeuvring. That is why I chose to analyse in depth two games where White assumes some risks by launching a direct attack with f4.

See **game 13 Delchev-Van Wely**, Melilla, 21.11.2011 and **game 11 Ionov-Yevseev**, St. Petersburg 2011.

Points to remember:

If Black takes on c4, we recapture by the bishop and leave the pawn on d2.

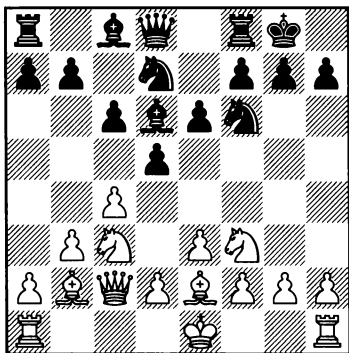
We play d4 early in the opening after 8...♞e8 9.0-0 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.d4 and against ...a6.

We exchange on d5 after ...b6 as above, or after 8...e5.

In the Sicilian structure after 8...♞e8 9.0-0 e5 10.cxd5 ♟xd5 11.♟e4 ♟c7, we play 12.♟g3! and aim for d4.

Step by Step

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. e3 ♟f6 4. ♜c3
e6 5. b3 ♜bd7 6. ♖c2 ♙d6 7. ♙b2
0-0 8. ♙e2!?



A. 8... ♖e8; B. 8... ♖e7; C. 8... a6
D. 8... dxc4, E. 8... b6.

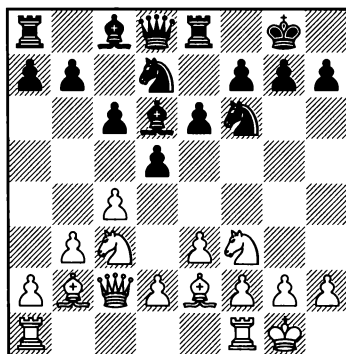
8... e5 9. cxd5 ♜xd5 10. ♜e4 ♙c7
11. ♜g3 transposes to lines A or B.

A. 8... ♖e8 9. 0-0

I think that the early ♙e2 does not fit in well to the bayonet attack, because it may prove to be a loss of tempo. Still, some strong players test this plan in rapid games. Zvjaginsev-Maletin, ch-RUS rapid 2011, saw the risky sacrifice 9. g4 ♜xg4 10. ♖g1 ♜gf6 11. ♜g5 ♜f8 12. 0-0 e5 13. f4 d4 14. ♜ce4 ♙f5 15. ♜xf7

♙xe4 16. ♜h6+ with a perpetual.

9. ♖g1 is more “solid”, but then 9... e5 10. cxd5 ♜xd5 11. ♜e4 gives Black extra options compared to the line without ♙e2. The e5-pawn is already protected so 11... ♜7f6 is possible. After 12. ♜xd6 ♖xd6 13. a3 ♙d7 White’s game is even a little worse.



A1. 9... dxc4; A2. 9... e5; A3. 9... b6.

9... ♖e7 transposes to 8... ♖e7.

A1. 9... dxc4 10. ♙xc4!

10. bxc4 e5 11. d4 (further tricky play with 11. ♖ad1 is dubious due to 11... e4!) brings about a well known variation from the Anti-Meran, where White has committed his dark-squared bishop to b2 too early.

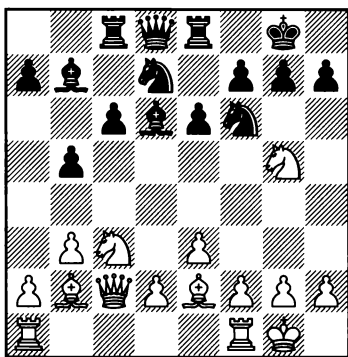
4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♝bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

According to Dreev (*The Meran & Anti-Meran Variations*, Chess Stars 2011), Black has fair chances after the flexible 11...♞e7, keeping open the option of ...e4, or 11...exd4 12.exd4 ♜f8.

10...b5

10...♜b6 has been played in several games. Perhaps the best retort is 11.♙d3 e5 12.♜e4 ♜xe4 13.♙xe4 g6 14.d4± exd4 15.♞ad1 although 11.d4 ♜xc4 12.bxc4, as in Benko-Mednis, Pasadena 1978, is also in White's favour. Black cannot free his play with ...e5, while the other break, 12...c5 13.♜b5 cxd4 14.♙xd4 e5 15.♜xd6 ♞xd6 16.♙xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞ad1±, is also horrible for him.

11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.♜g5 ♞c8



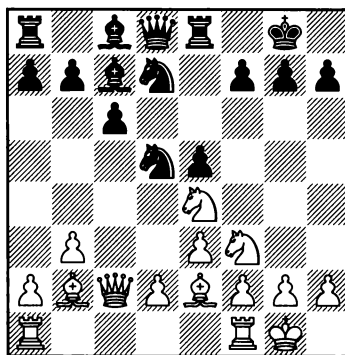
This position has been reached in Petkov-Massanet, Palma 2009. Now 13.♜ce4 ♜xe4 14.♜xe4 ♙b8 15.f4 f5 16.♜g3 g6 17.b4 is preferable for White, but maintaining tension with 13.f4!? was not bad either. After 13...a6 14.a4 ♞e7 15.♙h5 g6

16.♙f3 e5?! 17.f5, White was clearly better.

A2. 9...e5 10.cxd5 ♜xd5

10...cxd5 is typically bad if White has 11.♜b5. The game Izoria-Perez Rodriguez, Dos Hermanas Internet 2006, went 11...♙b8 12.♞ac1 d4, when best would have been 13.♜g5 h6? 14.♜xf7 ♜xf7 15.♙c4+ ♜f8 16.♙a3+.

11.♜e4 ♙c7



12.♜g3

We see a typical Sicilian pawn structure with colours reversed. However, Black's pieces are very passive and misplaced. His only active plan is connected with ...f5 and a kingside attack, but White's last move underlines the futility of such hopes. White, on the contrary, has two promising plans. The one is to play on the queenside, but Black should be able to oppose it by ...a5, ♞e7. The other one is to push d4,

possibly after some preparation as in the game Polugaevsky-Piket, Aruba 1994: 12.♖ad1 ♜f8. Here 13.d4 exd4 14.♟xd4 is premature due to 14...♙xh2+ 15.♙xh2 ♜h4+ 16.♙g1 ♜xe4 17.♜xe4 ♞xe4 18.♙f3 ♞e7 and Black can hold this position, but White could insert 13.♟g3 ♟g6 14.a3 a5 when 15.d4!± is already fine. Polugaevsky opted for slow manoeuvring with 13.d3 ♜e7 14.a3 a5 15.♞fe1 ♙f5 16.♟g3 ♙g6 17.♜c4 ♟b6 18.♜g4 ♜d7 19.♟h4, with a slight pull. The text seems like an improved version of this game. See also **game 10 D.Gurevich-Vigorito**, USA 1998 for more explanations.

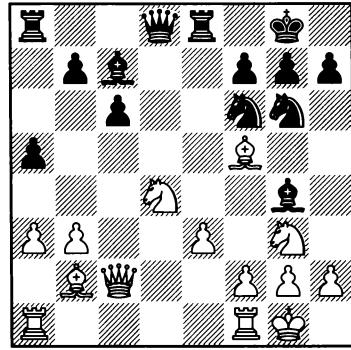
12...♟f8

The attempt to build up a Maróczy bind by 12...♟b4 13.♜b1 c5 14.a3 ♟d5 15.♞c1 b6, as in Gritsak-Golod, Biel 2009, is dubious. White can attack it by 16.b4!. The same break is possible as a real sacrifice after 15...h6, e.g. 16.b4! cxb4 17.axb4 ♟xb4 18.d4 exd4 19.♟xd4, with excellent compensation. Of course, instead of retreating to 13.♜b1, it would be even more consistent to activate the queen on c4.

13.a3 a5!

13...♜e7 14.b4 g6 15.♞ac1 gives White clear play on the c-file.

14.d4 ♟g6 15.♙d3! exd4
16.♟xd4 ♙g4 (16...♙e5 17.♞ae1±)
17.♙f5 ♟f6



I have been following the game Grischuk-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2011. White has the upper hand. Nothing can stop him from rolling the f- and e-pawns. Perhaps the best way to do it is 18.h3 ♙xf5 19.♟dxf5 ♙e5 20.f4 ♙xb2 21.♜xb2±, although 18.f3 ♙h5 19.♞ae1, as played, was not bad either.

A3. 9...b6

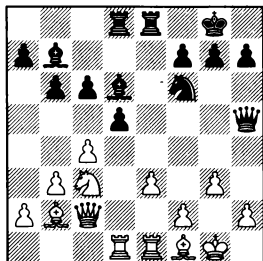
Now that the bayonet attack is no longer an option, this fianchetto is quite viable. Perhaps it is even the most solid retort to White's set-up.

10.cxd5

I like this exchange since the symmetry would be bad for Black due to 10...cxd5 11.♟b5. White has another reasonable option though. The position after 10.d4 ♙b7 11.♞ad1 ♜e7 12.♞fe1 ♞ad8 has been topical lately. It seems that 13.♙d3 e5 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.dxe5 ♟xe5 is only equal so White has been test-

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♗c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

ing 13.♙f1 e5 14.dxe5 ♘xe5 15.♘xe5
♗xe5 16.g3 ♗h5



White's bishops are more active than their black counterparts. Now 17.cxd5, creating an isolani, deserves attention, but 17.♙g2 dxc4 18.bxc4 ♙c8 19.♘e2, as in Hracek-Schulz, Germany 2010, is also pleasant for White.

10...exd5 11.d4 ♙b7 12.♗fd1

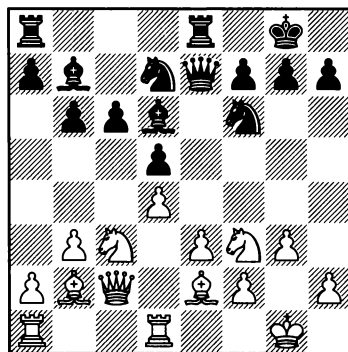
I have played the same pawn structure (see Part 4, **game 7 Delchev-Collutiis**, Plovdiv 2010) and I think it is very comfortable for White. Basically, he plays without any risks. If he completed development and redeployed the light-squared bishop to g2, his game would be better. It is good to begin this manoeuvre right away in order to avoid counterplay in the centre. The game M. Gurevich-Dreev, Cap d'Agde 2002 saw 12.♗ad1 ♗e7 13.♗fe1 ♗ac8 14.♗f5 (14.♙f1 c5 15.♗b1 c4↑) 14...♗e6=.

12...♗e7

12...♘e4 13.♘xe4 dxe4 14.♘e5
♗c7, Skembris-Katzourakis, Kal-

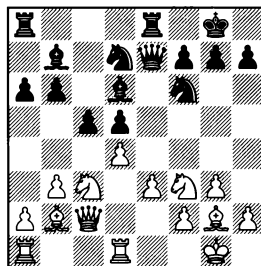
lithea 2008, should be met by
15.♗xe4±.

13.g3



A critical position. White needs another two moves on ♙e2-f1-g2 so maybe Black should attempt to get some counterplay here. The most obvious try is:

13...c5 14.♘b5 ♙b8 15.♙f1 a6
16.♖c3 ♙d6 17.♙g2



Now 17...c4 is dubious due to 18.bxc4 dxc4 19.e4, but the hanging pawns in the event of 17...♗ac8 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.♘h4 ♗e6 20.♗d2± would also be a cause of constant concern to Black.

13...♗ac8 is more clever. White follows with 14.♗ac1, when 14...

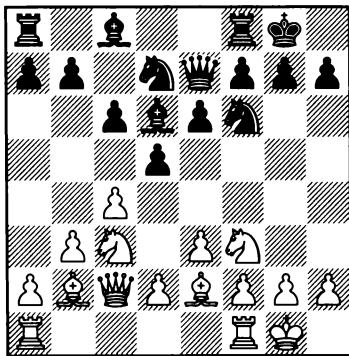
♖e4 (or 14...c5 15.♗f1) 15.♖xe4 dxe4 16.♖d2 c5 17.dxc5 (17.d5 ♗xd5 18.♖c4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 ♖f6 20.♗b5 ♗ed8 21.♗xf6 ♜xf6 22.♜xe4=) 17...♗xc5 18.♖c4 ♖f6 19.♜b1 ♜e6 20.♖e5 ♗d5 21.♗b5 ♗ed8 22.♗a6 gives him the better pieces.

In the game Bischoff-Boudre, Bad Zwosten 2002, Black opted for a passive stand:

13...♗ad8 14.♗f1 ♖f8 15.♗g2 ♖g6 16.♖d2 ♗b8 17.♗e1±

White has more space for manoeuvring while Black's task is not so trivial. White's main threat is e3-e4, but he has another possible plan with b3-b4. He can also follow my set-up against Collutiis – ♗ad1, ♜c1, ♗a3, trading the bishops.

B. 8...♜e7 9.0-0



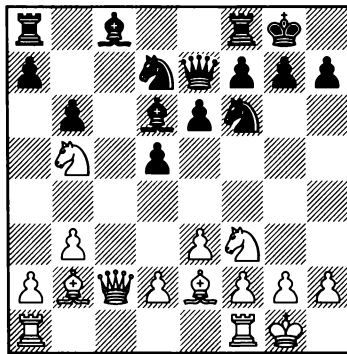
I covered the risky plan with 9.♗g1!? in the previous chapter. Now Black chooses between:

B1. 9...b6; B2. 9...e5; B3. 9...♗e8; B4. 9...a6; B5. 9...dxc4.

B1. 9...b6?!

This move is almost always dubious against the Réti set-up without d4 because White gains the bishop pair advantage with:

10.cxd5 cxd5 (10...exd5 11.♖d4) 11.♖b5±



11...♗a6!

11...♗b7 is too passive. The game Moskalenko-Alsina Leal, Barcelona 2008, went 12.♖xd6 ♜xd6 13.♗ac1 ♗ac8 14.♜b1 a6 15.♜a1 ♗fd8 16.h3 h6 17.♖e5 ♖e8 18.♖xd7 ♜xd7 19.♗d4 ♜d6 20.♜b2 ♗xc1 21.♗xc1 ♗c8 22.♗xc8 ♗xc8 23.♜c3 ♗b7 24.a4 f6 25.f4±.

12.♖fd4!

White is also slightly better after:

a) 12.♗fc1 ♗fc8 13.♜d1 ♗xb5 14.♗xb5 ♗a3! 15.♗ab1 (15.♗xa3! ♜xa3 16.♖d4±) 15...♗xb2 16.♗xb2 ♜b4 (16...♗xc1! 17.♜xc1 ♜c5 18.♜xc5 bxc5 19.d4 cxd4 20.♖xd4 ♗c8 21.f3 ♖f8 22.♗c2 ♗xc2 23.♖xc2

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

♗e7=) 17.♙e2 ♘e4 18.♘d4 g6
19.♞bc2 ♞f8 20.♙b5±, Roiz-Le
Roux, Caleta 2011.

b) 12.♞ac1 ♞fc8 13.♞b1 ♞c5 (or
13...♙xb5 14.♙xb5 ♙a3 15.♙xa3
♞xa3 16.♘d4±) 14.a4 ♙xb5 15.♙xb5
a6 16.♙e2±.

12...♙xb5

In Shulman-Grover, Reykjavik
2010, Black had to part with both
bishops after 12...♞fc8?! 13.♘c6!
♞f8 14.♘xd6 ♞xd6 15.♙xa6 ♞xc6
16.♞d1 ♞c7 17.♞c1 ♙d8 18.♞e2±.

13.♘xb5 ♞fc8 14.♞d1 ♙e5
15.d4 ♙b8 16.♞c1±.

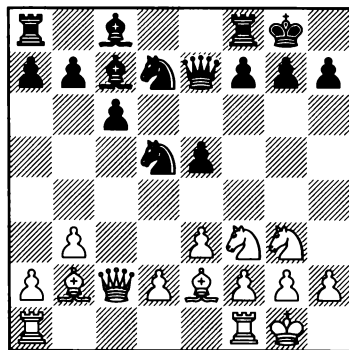
Black's queenside is weak.

B2. 9...e5 10.cxd5 ♘xd5

10...cxd5 11.♙b5 gives White a
strong initiative: 11...♙b4 12.a3 (12.
♘g5!? e4 13.♞fc1) 12...♙a5 13.♞ac1
(or 13.♞fc1 e4 14.♘fd4 ♘e5 15.a4
♙d7 16.♙a3 ♙b4 17.♙xb4 ♞xb4
18.♞c3±) 13...e4 14.♘fd4 ♘e5 15.f4±.

11.♘e4 ♙c7 12.♘g3

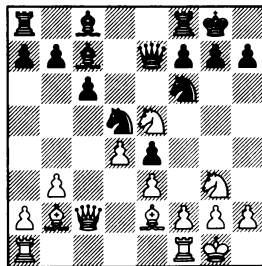
This move is not obligatory at
all. White could leave the knight
in the centre and play a very good
version of the Sicilian with 12.d3!?.
Then 12...f5 13.♘g3 (13...f4 14.exf4)
would give White chances of coun-
terattacking by e4.



I have analysed in line A the
game Grischuk-Kramnik which
reached the same position, only
with ...♞e8 instead of ...♞e7. This
difference allowed Black to rede-
ploy his d7-knight via f8-g6. In the
diagram position he can follow the
same routine:

12...♞e8

The alternative 12...♘f6 allows
White to take over the e5-square
with 13.d4 (He can also maintain
the tension with 13.a3!? e4 14.♘d4
g6 15.f3 exf3 16.♙xf3 ♘g4 17.♘de2
or even 13.d3.) 13...e4 (13...♙b4
14.♞c1 exd4 15.♙xd4; 13...exd4
14.♙xd4 ♙b6 15.♙b2±) 14.♘e5.



The game Davies-Wessman, Katrineholm 1995, went 14...g6?! 15.♙c4 ♘b6, when 16.a4! (threatening ♙a3) 16...♙xc4 17.bxc4 c5 18.a5 a6 19.h3 would have been in White's favour. For instance: 19... cxd4 20.exd4 e3 21.♙a3 or 19...♙e8 20.f4 exf3 21.♙xf3 ♙e6 22.♙af1↑ cxd4 23.exd4 ♙xe5 24.dxe5 ♖c5+ 25.♙f2 ♘d7 26.♗d2!!, with a decisive attack.

Stronger is 14...♙e8!, intending to capture on e5. Perhaps White should opt for a tiny edge after 15.♙fd1 ♘d7 (15...a5 16.a3) 16.♖xe4 (16.♙c4 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♙xe5 18.♙xd5 cxd5 19.♙xd5 ♙xg3 20.hxg3 f6 21.♙c5 ♙d7 should be level.) 16... ♘5f6 17.♗f4 ♘d5 18.♘f5 ♗f6 19.♗e4 ♘xe5 20.♘g3 ♙e7 21.dxe5 ♙xe5 22.♙xe5 ♙xe5 23.♗d4 ♙e8 24.♙ac1 ♗xd4 25.♙xd4 ♙e6 26.♘e4±.

13.d3 (aimed against ...e4)
13...♘f8 14.a3 ♘g6 15.♙fe1 ♙d7 16.h3

There is a long manoeuvring ahead.

B3. 9...♙e8

Black practically forces White to define his future plans about the d-pawn.

10.d4 dxc4

Alternatively:

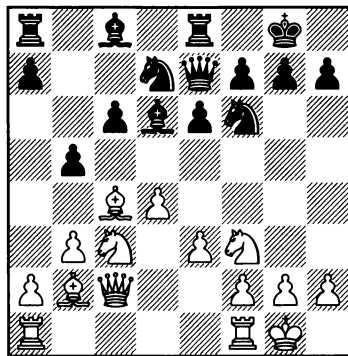
- a) 10...b6 transposes to line A3.
- b) 10...e5 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 (11...

cxd5 12.♘b5 e4 13.♘xd6 ♗xd6 14.♘e5±) 12.♘xd5 cxd5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♙fd1±.

11.♙xc4 b5

a) 11...e5? 12.♘g5 ♙f8 13.f4! (13. ♘ce4 is also good.) 13...exf4 14.exf4 h6 (14...♘b6 does not help either due to 15.♙ae1 ♖c7 16.♘ce4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 g6 18.f5!) 15.♙ae1 ♗d8, Polak-Alaimo, Siracusa 2007. Here simplest would have been 16.♘e6 fxe6 17.♙xe6, winning a pawn.

b) 11...h6?! addresses the weakness of f7, but exposes g6. White can exploit it by 12.♙ad1 e5 13.♘h4! ♘f8 At last all the light squares are covered, but now the central dark squares are hanging: 14.♘e4 ♘xe4 (14...♙c7 15.dxe5 ♘g4 16.♘f3 ♙f5 17.♖c1 ♙xe4 drops the queen after 18.♙a3+-.) 15.♗xe4 exd4 16.♗xd4+- ♙e5 17.♗xe5 ♖xe5 18.♙xe5 ♙xe5 19.♙d8.



12.♙d3

12.♙e2 is more passive although things are not too clear. I have

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♞c2 ♜d6 7.♜b2 0-0 8.♜e2!?

analysed 12...♜b7 13.♟g5!? ♞ac8 (13...h6 14.♟ge4 ♜c7 15.a3 a5 16.♞fc1; 13...e5 14.♟ce4 ♟xe4 15.♟xe4 exd4 16.♟xd6 ♞xd6 17.♞ad1 c5 18.♜xb5 a6 19.♜xd7 ♞xd7 20.f3 ♞b5 21.exd4 ♞e2 22.♞c3) 14.♟ce4 c5!? (14...♜b8 15.♟c5 ♟xc5 16.dxc5 e5 17.b4±) and suddenly Black obtains considerable counterplay, e.g. 15.♜xb5 ♟xe4 16.♟xe4 ♜xh2+ 17.♟xh2 ♞h4+ 18.♟g1 ♜xe4 19.♞e2 cxd4! 20.♞fc1 (20.♞ac1 ♜xg2=) 20...♟e5.

12...♜b7 13.♟g5

White has not much of a choice.

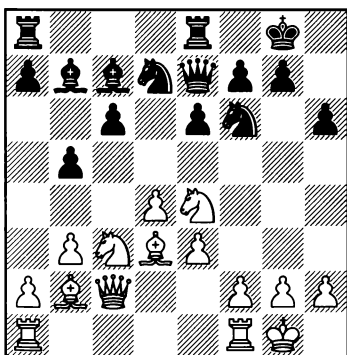
13.♟e4 ♟xe4 14.♜xe4 f5! 15.♜d3 c5! offers Black the initiative.

13.e4 e5 14.♟e2 is unclear, but Black's pieces are harmoniously placed.

13...h6

13...♜xh2+ 14.♟xh2 ♟g4+ loses to 15.♟g3 ♞xg5 16.f4.

14.♟ge4 ♜c7



Black has two possible plans

here. One of them is to defend the b5-pawn by ...a6 and push ...c6-c5. Or he can open the centre by ...e5, leaving ...c5 for an appropriate moment. It seems that 15.a3 e5 16.♞fe1 a5 17.♞ac1 exd4 18.exd4 ♞f8 is fairly balanced: 19.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 20.♟e4 ♟xe4 21.♞xe4 ♞d8 so White should firstly activate his rooks:

15.♞fd1 ♞ac8 16.♞ac1

Now 16...e5 is not good owing to 17.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 18.♜f5 exd4 19.♞xd4. The game Sasikiran-Fressinet, Haute Evry 2008, went 16...a6 17.♟e2 ♟xe4 18.♜xe4 ♟f6 19.♜f3 ♜b6 when instead of 20.e4 c5=, White could have preserved a tiny edge with 20.♞b1 c5 21.♜xb7 ♞xb7 22.dxc5 ♜xc5 23.♜xf6 gxf6 24.♟g3 ♜e7 25.♟h5 ♞xc1 26.♞xc1± due to his safer king.

B4. 9...a6 10.d4 b5

10...e5 11.dxe5 ♟xe5 12.cxd5 cxd5 leads to a typical IQP position with Black's queen already committed to e7. White can follow the plan of the model **game 11 Ionov-Yevseev**, for instance, 13.♞ad1 ♜e6 14.♟xe5 ♜xe5 15.f4 ♜c7 16.♜f3 ♞c5 17.♞f2 ♞ad8 18.♟a4 ♞e7 19.♟d4±, D.Gurevich-B.Kogan, Estes Park 1986.

11.e4 e5

11...b4 12.e5 bxc3 13.exd6 is clearly better for White.

12.cxd5

White has many paths to a significant advantage, for example: 12.exd5 cxd5 13.c5 ♖c7 14.c6 exd4 15.cxd7 dxc3 16.dxc8 ♖ ♗xc8 17.♙c1±, with an extra piece.

12...cxd5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♘xd5±

I do not understand what Black was expecting from this line in Gel-fand-Smeets, Nice 2010.

B5. 9...dxc4 10.♙xc4!?

This plan, based on the idea to keep the pawn on d2 and control the centre with f4, is completely new in this particular position.

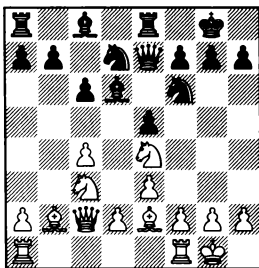
Another way of deviating from the big theory is:

10.bxc4!? e5! 11.♘g5! (instead of transposing to the Anti-Meran with 11.d4)

11...♘c5

Another developing move is:

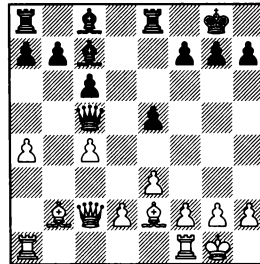
11...♗e8 12.♘ge4



a) 12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♙c7 14.c5

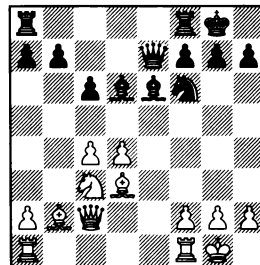
f5 15.♘g3 (15.♘d6!? ♙xd6 16.cxd6 ♖xd6 17.f4↑) 15...g6 16.♙c4+ ♖g7 17.f4 ♘xc5 18.d4 exd4 19.exd4 ♘e4 20.♘xe4 fxe4 21.d5±, Miltner-Pelletier, Germany 2007. Black's king will feel uncomfortable at h6.

b) 12...♙c7 13.a4 (Anastasian-T.L.Petrosian, Yerevan 2006, saw 13.♖ad1 ♘f8 14.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 15.f4 ♖h6?! 16.f5±, but it was stronger to keep the queen in the centre with 15...♖e7.) 13...♘xe4 14.♘xe4 ♘c5 15.♘xc5 ♖xc5



16.♙d3!. Piece play above all! The d-pawn can wait. 16...h6 17.♙a3 ♖a5 18.♗b1 ♙d8 19.♙b4 ♖c7 20.a5 ♙e6 21.c5 a6 22.♙c3±. The e5 and b7-pawns are weak. Later White can finally open the centre with d2-d4.

12.d4 exd4 13.exd4 ♘e6 14.♘xe6 ♙xe6 15.♙d3



4.♘c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♙c2 ♘d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

The mobile pawn pair in the centre gives White an initiative. I have analysed here:

a) 15...♙xh2+? 16.♙xh2 ♘g4+ 17.♙g3 h5 18.f4 ♙fe8 19.♙h1±.

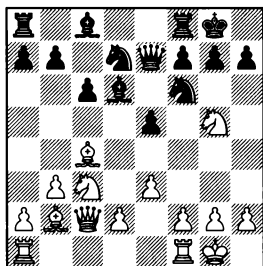
b) 15...♙c7 16.♙fe1 ♙ad8 17.♘e4 ♘xe4 18.♙xe4 ♙d6 (18...h6 19.d5) 19.♙xh7+ ♘h8 20.g3±.

c) 15...♙g4 16.♙ae1 ♙c7 17.h3 ♙h5 18.c5 ♙h2+ 19.♙h1 ♙f4 20.d5 cxd5 21.♙xh7+ ♘h8 22.♘b5±.

c) 15...♙fe8 16.♙fe1 ♙c7 17.h3 ♙d7 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♙xe4 h6 20.♙ad1±.

10...b5

Or 10...e5 11.♘g5!



a) 11...b5 12.♙d3 h6 13.♘ge4 ♙b8 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.♘e4±.

b) 11...♘b6 12.♙d3 h6 13.♘ge4 ♘xe4 14.♘xe4 ♙c7 15.a3 f5 (15...♙d8 16.f4 f5 17.♘g3 e4 18.♙e2 ♘d5 19.♙c4 ♙f7 20.♘e2) 16.♘c5 e4 17.♙e2, with typical for the Taimanov (with colours reversed) pressure on the queenside.

c) 11...h6 12.♘ge4 ♙c7 13.a4! (threatening with ♙a3) 13...♙e8

14.a5! (A more straightforward plan is 14.♙a3 ♙d8 15.b4.) 14...a6 15.f3!±.

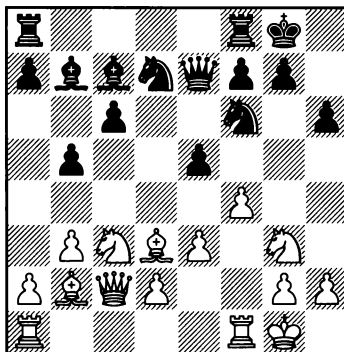
11.♙d3!?

11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.♘g5 h6 13.♘ge4 ♙c7 14.f4 is also a worthy idea.

11...♙b7

Perhaps Black should prevent ♘g5 with 11...h6. White can then choose 12.♘d4 ♙b7 13.f4 a6 14.♘e4 c5 15.♘xd6 ♙xd6 16.♘f3 ♙fd8 17.♙ad1 or 12.a4 b4 13.♘e4 ♘xe4 14.♙xe4 ♙b7 15.a5 a6, with complex play.

12.♘g5 h6 13.♘ge4 ♙c7 14.f4 e5 15.♘g3!



White has good prospects for a kingside attack.

C. 8...a6 9.d4!

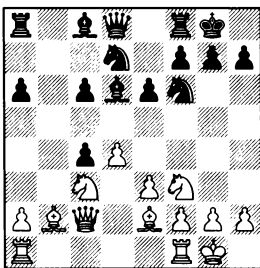
White has lost a tempo on ♙e2 so the bayonet attack is not attrac-

tive anymore. Black is the first to start an attack. The game Fressinet-Spoelman, Wattenscheid 2011, seems to confirm such an assessment: 9.♟g1 b5 10.g4 bxc4 11.bxc4 ♖b8 12.g5 ♜e4 13.♜d4 ♜c7 14.♜xe4 dxe4 15.♙c3 c5⁺.

C1. 9...b5; C2. 9...e5.

C1. 9...b5 10.0-0 ♙b7

Black does not succeed in eliminating the centre by 10...bxc4 11.bxc4 dxc4, intending 12.♙xc4 c5 due to:



12.♜a4!. Now 12...c5? 13.dxc5 ♜xc5 loses to 14.♜xc5 ♙xc5 15.♜g5+–, Spirin-Collutiis, Aman-tea 2011, but 12...♙b7 13.♜c5!? leads to similar consequences.

11.c5

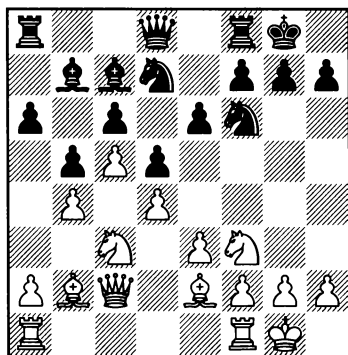
11.♞ad1 is a bit too mundane. White will have to close the queenside anyway. For example:

11...♞e8 (11...bxc4 12.bxc4 c5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.dxc5 ♜xc5 15.♜d4 g6 16.♜a4 ♞c8 17.♜xc5 ♞xc5 18.♜b3 ♜c7 19.♙a3[±]) 12.c5 (or 12.a3 bxc4 13.bxc4 c5=) 12...♙c7 13.b4 e5!

Or 13...a5?! 14.a3 ♜e7 (14...e5 15.♜xb5 cxb5 16.c6 ♙xc6 17.dxe5 ♜xe5 18.♜xe5 ♙xe5 19.♙xe5 ♞xe5 20.♜xc6[±]) 15.♞fe1 e5 16.♜xb5 cxb5 17.c6; 13...♜e7 14.a4 e5 15.axb5 axb5 16.♜xb5 cxb5 17.c6[±].

14.e4 ♜xe4 (14...dxe4 15.♜xe4 ♜xe4 16.dxe5 ♜exc5 17.bxc5 ♜e7 18.♜g5 g6 19.e6 fxe6 20.♜e4[±]; 14...exd4 15.♜xd4 ♜xe4 16.♜xe4 ♞xe4 17.♙d3 ♞h4 18.g3 ♞h5 19.♞fe1[±]) 15.♜xe4 dxe4 16.♜xe5 ♜f6 17.f3 e3! 18.♞fe1 ♜d5, with counterplay.

12...♙c7 13.b4



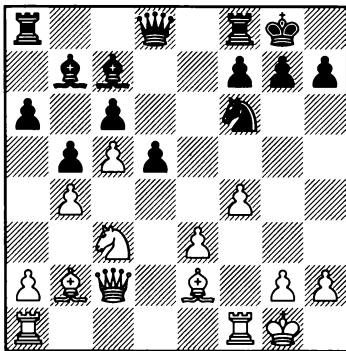
White has a considerable space advantage. The inclusion of 13...a5?! 14.a3 is not recommendable, because 14...e5 could be punished by 14.♜xb5 e4 15.♜e5 cxb5 16.c6 ♙c8 17.cxd7 ♙xd7 18.bxa5 ♙xa5 19.♜b3 ♖b8 20.♙c3 ♙c7 21.♞fc1, with total domination.

13...e5 13.dxe5

13.e4 dxe4 14.♜xe4 ♜xe4 15.♜xe4 ♜f6 16.♜c2 e4 17.♜e5 ♞e8 is rather unclear.

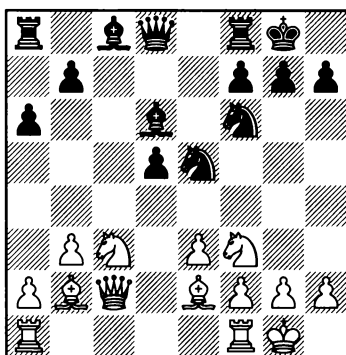
4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♟bd7 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.♟b2 0-0 8.♟e2!?

13...♟xe5 14.♟xe5 ♟xe5
15.f4 ♟c7



White has the better pieces. See my **game 12 Delchev-Brunello**, Porto Carras 10.11.2011.

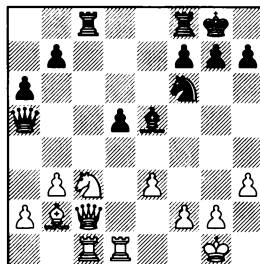
C2. 9...e5 10.cxd5 cxd5
11.dxe5 ♟xe5 12.0-0



A very important position for the ♟e2 set-up. It can arise after different move orders and White cannot avoid it, but he has nothing to complain about. The isolator on d5 gives him an easy game with plenty of potential for manoeuvring.

12...♟e6

12...♟g4 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5 14.♟xg4 ♟xg4 15.h3 ♟f6 exchanges more pieces, but Black is playing for two results only.



See **game 13 Delchev-Van Wely**, Melilla, 21.11.2011.

12...♟e6 is more complex, but White retains a pleasant game after 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5 14.f4. See **game 11 Ionov-Yevseev**, St. Petersburg 2011.

D. 8...dxc4

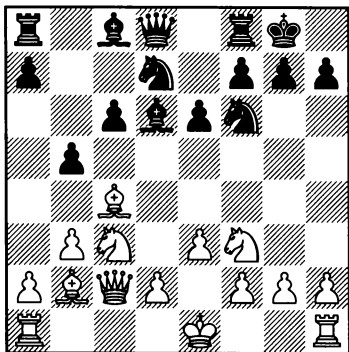
This exchange is seldom seen at this point, but in fact it is more logical here than after 8...♞e8 9.0-0, because the rook move would be superfluous in the event of 9...dxc4 10.♟xc4.

The only way for White to exploit the text is to organise a kingside attack leaving the king in the centre.

9.♟xc4

9.bxc4 e5 10.0-0 ♞e8 11.d4 (11.♟g5 ♟c5=) is an extensively tested position from the Anti-Meran,

where the bishop is not at its best place on b2. Cornette-Arutnian, Heraklio 2002, saw 10.g4?! ♖xg4 11.♗e4 ♗c7 12.♙g1 f5 13.♗eg5, when instead of 13...h6? 14.♙xg4!, Black had 13...♗df6 14.h3 ♗xf2! 15.♗xf2 h6.



9...b5 10.♗e2

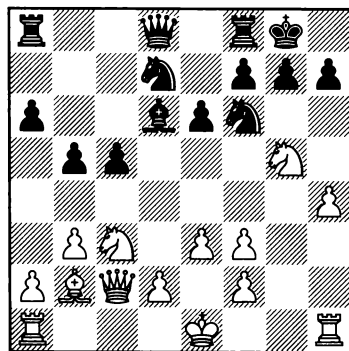
10.♗d3 ♗b7 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗ge4 ♗e7 13.0-0 is a solid alternative. White can try to extract some value from his better minor pieces, e.g. 13...b4 14.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 15.♗a4 ♗c8 16.♗h7+ ♗h8 17.♗e4.

10...♗b7 11.♗g5 a6 12.h4!?

An amazing move, typical for the original style of Mihail Suba. 12.a4 would be the standard positional option.

12...c5 13.♗f3 ♗xf3 14.gxf3

Black's defence is not trivial, because he has not any obvious ways to generate counterplay.



The game Suba-Cosma, Bucharest 1996, continued 14...♗e5 15.f4 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 ♗e8, when instead of 17.0-0-0, White would have been clearly better following 17.♗e2! e5 18.♙ag1→. The Réti bishop is X-ray-ing the kingside, both white rooks are active.

E. 8...b6 9.♙g1!

I think that the bayonet attack is White's best weapon versus the fianchetto set-up. In my database it scores 8-1! If Black parries the first wave of the attack, things might get complicated for White due to his king in the centre. However, the second players have not shown a good defensive method so far.

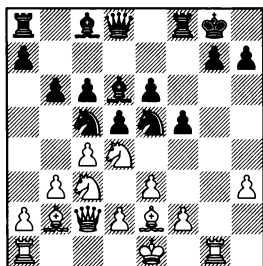
9.g4 is dubious: 9...♗xg4

In Chadaev-Potapov, Russia 2011 was 9...♗b7 10.g5 ♗e8 11.h4 e5 12.h5 b5? 13.♗d3 e4 14.♗xe4 dxe4 15.♗xe4 f5, when 16.gxf6 ♗dxf6 17.h6 ♗xe4 18.hxg7 wins.

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

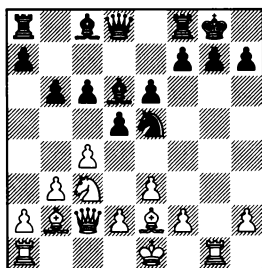
10.♞g1 ♘de5!

Practice has only seen 10...f5?! 11.h3 [Perhaps the best move order is 11.cxd5 exd5 (11...cxd5 12.♘b5) 12.h3] 11...♘ge5 (or 11...♘gf6 12.♘d4↑ ♞e8 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♘cb5 ♙e5 15.♘c7 ♙xc7 16.♞xc7 ♚b8 17.♞d6 ♜f7 18.♘xe6 and White won in Andreikin-S.Kaplan, Plovdiv 2008) 12.♘d4 ♘c5 [12...♘b8 is too passive. White has an attack after 13.cxd5 exd5 14.0-0-0 f4 15.♘f3 ♞e7 (15...♙f5 16.e4) 16.exf4 ♜xf4 17.♘xe5 ♙xe5 18.♙d3→] 13.0-0-0



This position was reached in Aronian-Gelfand, Leon 2010. White should have opted for 13.cxd5 exd5 (13...cxd5 14.♘cb5 ♘g6 15.h4) 14.f4 ♞h4+ 15.♘d1 ♘g6 16.b4 ♘e6 17.♘xc6 ♙b7 18.b5 ♘h8 19.♞b3, with a messy game.

11.♘xe5 ♘xe5



It is much safer to have the f-pawn at f7, instead of f5. Now it is unclear how to lead the attack after 12.0-0-0 ♘g6 (12...dxc4 13.♘e4→). I have also analysed:

12.cxd5 cxd5!

12...exd5 gives more chances in view of the pawn march in the centre: 13.0-0-0 ♘g6 14.f4 ♙e8 (or 14...b5 15.f5 ♘e5 16.d4 ♘d7 17.e4 b4 18.♘a4∞) 15.f5 ♘e5 16.d4 ♘d7 17.e4 dxe4 18.d5, although it is only a draw following 18...♘e5 19.dxc6 ♘d3+ 20.♙xd3 exd3 21.♘d5 dxc2 22.♞xg7+ ♘f8 23.♞g8+, with a perpetual.

13.♘b5 ♙b7 14.♘xd6 ♞xd6 15.f4 ♘g6 16.h4 ♙ac8 17.♞b1. Now Black opens up his bishop and takes over the initiative with 17...d4! 18.h5 ♘h4 19.♙xd4 f6↑.

I should also note that the thematic exchange 9.cxd5 is not too promising, because after 9...cxd5 (9...exd5 is risky. In Mikhalevski-Misiano, Biel 2010, White owned the initiative: 10.♘d4 ♙b7 11.♘f5 ♙b8 12.d4 ♙e8 13.g4 ♘f8 14.h4→.) 10.♘b5, Black has 10...♙c5, covering the c-file. Then 11.a3 a6 12.♘bd4 ♙b7 13.b4 ♙d6 is balanced.

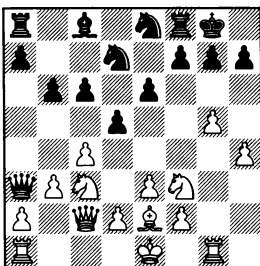
9...♙b7

This is the most natural development, but we'll see that White gets a strong attack in this line. I admire the fine sense of danger of Dreev who chose twice in 2002:

9...♚e7 10.g4 ♔a3

This exchange is positionally dubious, because Black remains with permanently weak dark squares, but it does take the sting out of White's onslaught. White should switch to strategic play with a slight plus for him.

11.g5 ♖e8 12.♔xa3 ♚xa3 13.h4

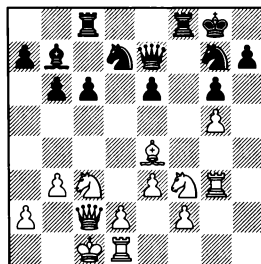


13...dxc4

Dreev improves on his game against Bischoff in Hastings 2000, which saw 13...♖d6 14.♔d3 g6 15.h5 ♖f5 16.cxd5 cxd5 when 17.♔xf5! exf5 18.♖b5 would have been clearly better for White. It would be also interesting to exchange immediately on d5: 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♖d4 ♔b7 16.♖cb5 ♖xb5 17.♖xb5 ♚e7 18.♚c7 ♔a6 19.♚d6 ♚xd6 20.♖xd6 ♖c5 21.♔xa6 ♖xa6 22.♖e2±.

The text fixes a target on c4 and keeps the centre open. In Zvjaginsev-Dreev, Poikovsky 2002, White recaptured 14.bxc4 ♖d6 15.h5 ♔a6 16.♖e4 ♖xe4 17.♚xe4 and was only slightly better. The exchange of the knights relieved Black's defence. I think that White has the better prospects after:

14.♔xc4 ♔b7 (14...♔a6 15.♚g4!?) 15.♔d3 g6 16.h5 ♚e7 (16...c5 17.♔e4 ♔xe4 18.♚xe4±) 17.♚g3 ♖g7 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♔e4 ♚ac8 20.0-0-0



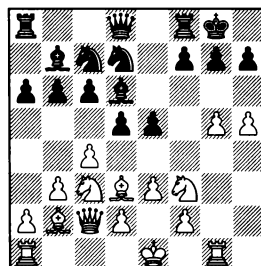
The open h-file and the sensitive square f6 define White's edge.

It is indicative that no one has followed in Dreev's shoes in later games.

10.g4 e5

Practice has also seen:

a) 10...a6?! is too slow. Petkov-Friedrich, Cesenatico 2010, went 11.g5 ♖e8 12.h4 e5 13.h5 ♖c7 14.♔d3! and the battle is over:



14...e4 (or 14...g6 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.♔xg6 ♚xf3 17.♔xh7+ ♖f8 18.♔f5±) Here best is 15.♖xe4 dxe4 16.♔xe4+-.

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♞bd7 6.♞c2 ♜d6 7.♜b2 0-0 8.♜e2!?

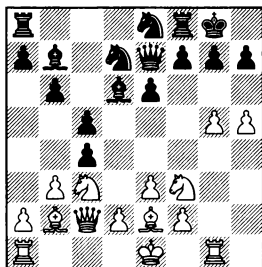
b) 10...c5 11.g5!. Aimed against 11...♞e4 which would stumble into 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♞xe4 dxe4 14.♞c3! f6 15.gxf6 ♜xf6 16.♞g5 ♜e5, Rotstein-Schmitz, Lido Estensi 2002. Here 17.d4 exd3 18.♞xd3 ♜xb2 19.♞d1+- is winning. Stefanova-Sebag, Ulaanbaatar 2010, saw 11.h4 ♜c8?! 12.0-0-0 ♞e4? 13.♞xe4 dxe4 14.♞g5± and Black was pawnless, but 11...♞e4! would have taken over the initiative: 12.♞xe4 dxe4 13.♞g5 ♜e5 14.♜xe5 ♞xe5 15.♞xe4 ♞xh4 16.0-0-0 f5±.

11...♞e8 12.h4 ♞e7

12...dxc4 should be met by 13.♞e4! cxb3 14.axb3 ♜c7 15.h5 as in the main line.

13.h5 dxc4

White intends to join the second rook in the attack after castling. Black should do something quickly in order to escape this scenario and it seems reasonable to activate the bishop. 13...f5 only opens files on the kingside: 14.gxf6 ♞dxf6 15.0-0-0±.



14.♞e4!!

There is no time to bother with pawns. 14.bxc4 f5! is unclear.

(but not 14...♜c7 15.♞e4 e5 16.♞h4 f5 17.♞c3 e4 18.h6 g6 19.f4)

14...cxb3 15.axb3

White has a strong initiative. For instance:

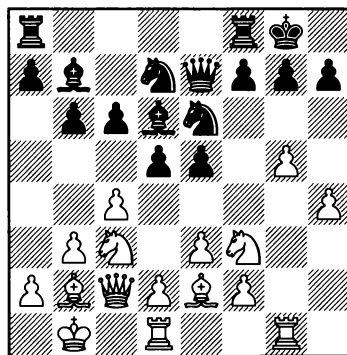
15...♜c7 16.♞f6+ ♞dxf6 17.gxf6 ♞xf6 18.♞c3 ♜d8 19.♜a4! or

15...f5 16.gxf6 ♞dxf6 17.♞xf6+ ♞xf6 18.h6 g6 19.♜a4! (against ♜e4) 19...♜c6 20.♞h4 ♜e8 21.♜d3+-.

The g6-square will be busted soon.
11.g5 ♞e8 12.0-0-0 ♞c7 13.h4

I'm following the game Socko-Ejsmont, Ustron 2006, but 13.♞b1, aimed against ...b5, is the better move order.

13...♞e6 (13...b5!) 14.♞b1 ♞e7



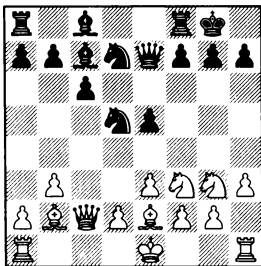
This position cannot be cracked without a break in the centre. Although 15.h5 is possible, I think that the best approach is 15.d4! e4 16.♞e5±.

White is clearly ahead with his offensive.

Complete Games

10. D.Gurevich–Vigorito USA 1998

1.♠f3 ♠f6 2.c4 c6 3.e3 d5 4.♠c3
e6 5.b3 ♠bd7 6.♙c2 ♠d6 7.♠b2
0-0 8.♠e2 ♙e7 9.h3 e5 10.cxd5
♠xd5 11.♠e4 ♠c7 12.♠g3



In the opening, White has played 9.h3, which I do not recommend. This move might prove superfluous and by all means it is less useful than 9.0-0. I chose to comment this game in an attempt to shed some light on the Sicilian pawn structure we see on the diagram. There is very little practical experience in it and both sides usually struggle to find a clear plan.

This type of the Sicilian with colours reversed can arise with ♙e7 or ♠e8. In both cases, it makes sense to retreat the centralised knight to g3. That not only hampers ...f5, but it also threatens with d2-d4. In one game White preferred 12.g4, but

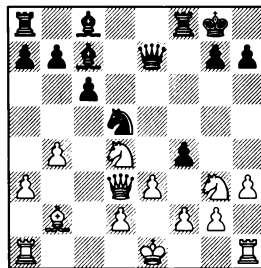
this move fits in with ♠g1 and not with the passive h3.

12...♠b4 13.♙b1 ♠c5

In similar positions, Black usually sends this knight to f8-g6 (after ...♠e8). White's loss of tempo on h3, however, allows Black to display activity first and organise ...e5-e4.

14.a3 ♠d5 15.♙c2 a5

Black should not miss the opportunity to push 15...e4!. After 16.♠d4 f5 (in the event of 16...♠xg3 17.fxg3 ♙d6 18.0-0 ♠xh3 19.gxh3 ♙xg3+ Black has only a draw.) 17.b4 ♠d3+ (17...f4 18.bxc5 fxg3 19.f3±) 18.♠xd3 exd3 19.♙xd3 f4



White is on the defensive. His king will never be safe on the kingside because of the lever on h3. e.g. 20.♠ge2 fxe3 21.dxe3 ♠d7 22.0-0 ♠ae8.

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

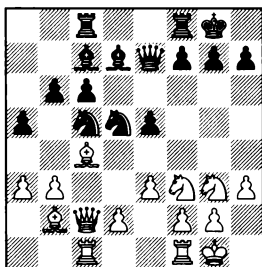
16.♞c1 b6 17.0-0

White provocatively allows ...e4, but apparently Vigorito trusted him without calculation. It was interesting to try 17.♙c4. Then 17...e4 would simply drop a pawn to 18.♖xe4 and 17...♞e8 18.d3 would take control over e4 while leaving the bishop active: 18...♖a6 19.0-0 b5 20.♙xd5 cxd5 21.♞c6 ♞b8 22.♞xd5 ♙b7 23.♞xb5±.

17...♙d7

17...e4! 18.♖d4 ♞d6 19.f4 ♞g6 20.♗h2 ♙d7 would have been balanced. Now White gets some initiative.

18.♙c4! ♞ac8



19.♖xe5

White also have the more active pieces following 19.e4 ♖f4 20.d4 exd4 21.♙xd4 ♖ce6 22.♖f5 ♞e8 23.♙e3 b5 24.♙d3±. The text simplifies to a better ending which Black should be able to hold.

19...♙xe5 20.♙xe5 ♞xe5 21.d4 ♖xe3 22.dxe5 ♖xc2 23.♞xc2 ♙e6

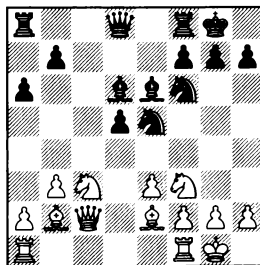
24.b4 axb4 25.axb4 ♖d7 26.f4 g5 27.fxg5 ♖xe5 28.♙xe6 fxe6 29.♞e1 ♖d3 30.♞xe6 ♖xb4 31.♞c4 ♖d5 32.♞exc6 ♞xc6 33.♞xc6 ♞d8

The golden endgame rule to put the rook behind the passer should have saved Black: 33...♞b8 34.♞d6 ♖e7 35.♞d7 ♗f8 36.♖e2 b5 37.♖d4 b4 38.♖b3±.

34.♖f5 ♗f7 35.♞h6 ♗g8 36.♖d6 ♖c3 37.♖f5 ♖d5 38.♞c6 ♗f7 39.♖d6+ ♗e7 40.♖b5 ♗f7 41.♗f2 ♗g7 42.♗f3 ♞e8 43.♖d6 ♞e3+ 44.♗g4 ♞b3 45.♖f5+ ♗f7 46.♗h5 ♞c3 47.♞h6 ♗g8 48.♞d6 ♖f4+ 49.♗h6 ♖xg2 50.h4 ♞c5 51.♞d8+ ♗f7 52.♞d7+ ♗e6 53.♞d2 ♞xf5 54.♞xg2 ♞f7 55.♞b2 ♞b7 56.♞b5 ♗d6 57.h5 ♖c6 58.♞f5 b5 59.g6 hxg6 60.hxg6 1-0

11. Ionov–Yevseev
St. Petersburg 2011

1.c4 c6 2.♖f3 d5 3.e3 ♖f6 4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 a6 8.d4 0-0 9.♙e2 e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♖xe5 12.0-0 ♙e6



13. ♖xe5

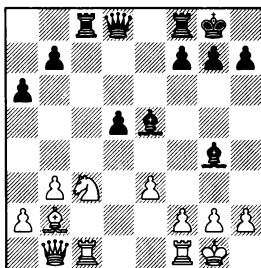
I think that mundane continuations do not promise White any advantage:

a) 13. ♖ad1 ♜c8 (13... ♖xf3+ 14. ♖xf3 ♜c7 15. h3 ♖h2+ 16. ♖h1 ♖e5 17. ♜d2 ♜ac8 18. ♖e2 ♖xb2 19. ♜xb2 ♜c2 20. ♜a1 is slightly better for White.) 14. ♜b1 ♜a5 15. ♜a1 ♜fd8 16. ♖d4 ♖d7. White's pieces stand solidly, but they are hampering each other.

b) 13. ♜ac1 ♜c8 14. ♜b1 ♖fg4 15. ♖xe5 ♖xe5!

15... ♖xe5 16. ♜cd1 ♜h4 cost Black a pawn in Halkias-Dominguez, Linares 2002: 17. f4 (17. g3±) 17... ♖g4 18. ♖xg4 ♜xg4 19. h3 ♜h4 20. f5 ♖d7 21. ♖xd5±.

16. ♖xg4 (The game Kovalyov-Haslinger, Benidorm 2008, finished in a draw after 16. h3 ♖h2+ 17. ♖h1 ♖b8 18. ♖xg4 ♖xg4 19. f4 owing to the perpetual check following 19... ♜h4 20. ♖xd5 ♖xh3.) 16... ♖xg4



17. ♖a4

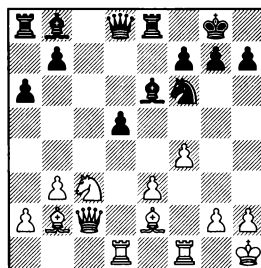
White should preserve his knight. Wang Rui-Chandler, Kuala Lumpur 2007, saw instead 17. ♜d3

♖e6?! 18. ♖a4 ♖xb2 19. ♖xb2 ♜a5 20. ♖a4 ♜b4 21. ♜d4±, but the brutal 17... ♖xc3 would have left White with a nice, but dead draw position with opposite coloured bishops.

17... ♖b8 18. ♜xc8 ♖xc8 19. ♖d4 ♜e8=, Portisch-Kasparov, Dubai 1986. White stands nicely, but he is not threatening anything really.

13... ♖xe5 14. f4 ♖b8 15. ♖f3

Perhaps crucial for the assessment of this variation is 15. ♖ad1 ♜e8 (The e3-pawn is irrelevant. Black gets crushed after 15... ♖a7 16. f5 ♖c8 17. ♖h1 ♖xe3? 18. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 19. ♖c4.) 16. ♖h1±



White has the more active pieces. He is intending ♖f3 with pressure on d5. Ionov speeds up play, but eventually all the complications should chill down to a rook end-game with a tiny edge for White.

15... ♜b6!

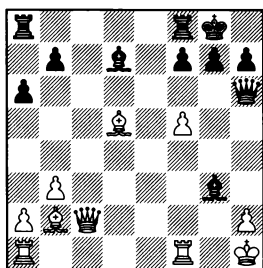
The queen hurries to help its king via e3. Or 15... ♖a7 16. f5 ♖c8 17. ♖h1±.

16. ♖h1

4.♘c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♖c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

The computer suggests an extremely weird variation which cannot attract any human, I'm sure, because of the multiple pins: 16.♖f2 ♙a7 17.♗ae1 d4 18.♘d1 dxe3 19.♘xe3 ♙d7 20.♖g3 ♙b5 21.♗f2 ♗fe8 22.♙e5 ♗ad8 23.♙h1 g6∞.

16...♖xe3 17.f5 ♙d7 18.♘xd5
♘xd5 19.♙xd5 ♖h6 20.g3! ♙xg3



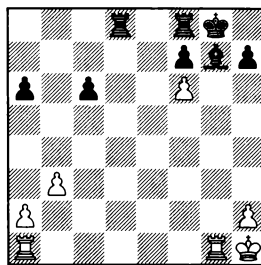
The first critical moment of the game.

I think that White should play 21.♖g2 ♙h4 22.♙c1!?

Instead, White can “win” the queen in a much better version than in the game (because the h-file is closed), but I doubt that he could aspire to a win after 22.♗f3 ♙f6 23.♗h3 (23.♗g1 ♙xb2 24.♖xb2 ♙h8 25.♗h3 ♖f6=) 23...♖xh3 24.♖xh3 ♙xb2∞. His king is too vulnerable under the fire of the long-range black pieces.

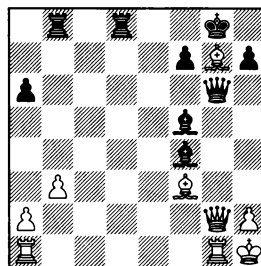
22...♖f6 23.♗g1 ♙c6 24.♙xc6
♖xc6 25.♖xc6 bxc6 26.♙h6 ♙f6
27.♙xg7 ♙xg7 28.f6 ♗ad8

White can squeeze out a small advantage, using the fact that Black's f8-rook is tied with the defence of the f7-pawn:



29.♗af1 ♗d6 30.♗f3 h6 31.a4 a5
32.♗f5 c5 33.♙xg7+ ♙h8 34.♗xc5
♗xf6 35.♗g3 ♗a8 36.♙g2±.

21.♗g1 ♙xf5 22.♖g2 ♗fd8
23.♙xb7 ♗ab8 24.♙f3 ♙f4 25.♙xg7
♖g6



26.♖f1?!

As they say, White does not sense the danger. 26.♙c3 ♖xg2+ 27.♙xg2+ ♙g6 28.♙e2 ♙f8 29.♗f1 ♙d2 would have been a draw ending. He is greedy to snatch the queen, probably in order to feel the moral winner of the opening battle, but that is not a pragmatic decision.

The rest of the game is not too interesting for us. White's defence is not trivial and his blunder on move 31 could be expected.

26...♙xg7 27.♙xg6+ hxg6

28.♖c4 ♘e5 29.♞e1 ♙f6 30.♜xa6
 ♜d2 31.♞e2? ♜d1+ 32.♙g2 ♞h8
 33.♜b7 ♙d4 34.♙g3 g5 0-1

12. Delchev–Brunello
Porto Carras Eu. team ch. 2011

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6
 4.♟c3 e6 5.♜c2 ♘bd7 6.b3 ♙d6
 7.♙b2 a6

Perhaps it is better to conceal this plan until White has developed the bishop to e2, for example, 7...0-0 8.♙e2 a6.

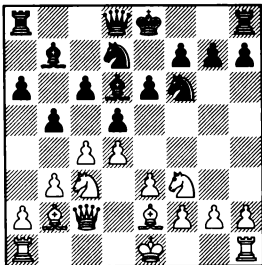
8.d4

8.♞g1!? is much sharper, but I did not want to unnecessarily stir the emotions of my team mates so early in the match.

8...b5 9.♙e2

With this move order, I could have found a more active place for my bishop: 9.c5! ♙c7 10.♙d3! ♜e7 11.♘e2! 0-0 12.0-0 e5 13.dxe5 ♘xe5 14.♙xe5 ♙xe5 15.♘xe5 ♜xe5 16.♘d4±.

9...♙b7



10.c5 ♙c7 11.b4 0-0 12.0-0 e5

Black has nothing to gain from waiting:

12...♞e8 13.♞ad1 e5 14.e4!;

12...♜e7 13.♞fe1! e5

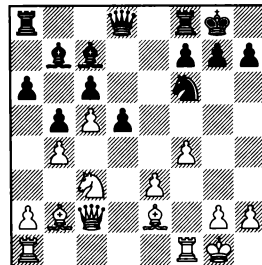
Or 13...a5 14.a3 axb4 15.axb4 ♞xa1 16.♙xa1 e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘d4 ♘c4 (18...g6 19.e4 dxe4 20.♘xe4 ♘d5 21.♜b2) 19.e4±.

14.dxe5

14.e4 is not too clear because of 14...dxe4 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♜xe4 f5! 17.♜h4 (or 17.♜e3 17...e4 18.♙d1 ♘f6) 17...♜xh4 18.♘xh4 ♙d8.

14...♘xe5 15.e4 ♞fe8 16.♘d4 dxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♜xe4 a5 19.♙d3 ♙g6 20.♜xe7 ♞xe7 21.♘f5±.

13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♙xe5
15.f4 ♙c7



16.e4

This move seemed very strong to me during the game, but the postmortem showed that, albeit clearly worse, Black has chances to hold his position. Perhaps I should have kept the tension by 16.a4! (or 16.♘d1! ♜e7 17.a4!) 16...♜e7 17.♘d1! (This move never crossed my mind.) 17...♘e4 18.♙d4 ♞fe8

4.♖c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♖c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

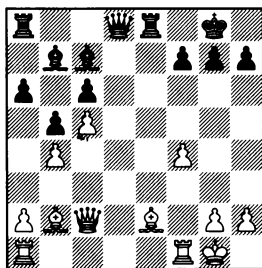
(18...a5 19.♖c3! ♘xc3 20.♖xc3 axb4 21.♖xb4 ♙a5 22.♖b2 bxa4 23.♙xg7 ♖xe3+ 24.♙h1±) 19.♖c3±. In this position all my long range pieces are active and I could set up a kingside attack.

16...dxe4 17.♖xe4 ♖xe4

Of course, Black should seek exchanges. After 17...♖d5?! 18.♙ad1! the queen has not a comfortable square: 18...♖e7 19.♙d3 ♖xb4 (19...♙xf4 20.♙de1 ♖c7 21.g3 ♙h6 22.♖d6 f6 23.♙xh7+ ♙h8 24.♖g6) 20.♖c3 f5 21.♖d6 (White is also better after 21.♖g3 ♖d5 22.♙de1 ♖f7 23.♖d4 ♙c8 24.♙xf5) 21...♖d5 22.♙de1 ♖d7 23.♖d4 ♙xd6 24.cxd6 ♙f6 25.♙e5. White has a tremendous initiative, for example: 25...♖xd6 26.♙xf5 ♙af8 27.♙e6+ ♙h8 28.f5 ♙c8 29.♙xd5 cxd5 30.♙f3 ♖c7 31.♙a3±

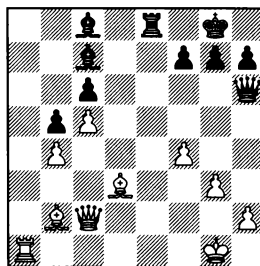
18.♖xe4 ♙e8 19.♖c2

19.♖f3 ♖d2 20.♙e5 ♙xe5 21.fxe5 ♖d4+ 22.♙h1 ♖d5 23.♙ad1 ♖xf3 24.♙xf3 ♙e7 25.♙d6 g6 is level.



19...♙e3?!

A critical moment of the game. Black denies me the c3-square, but he misses the opportunity to trade a pair of rooks by 19...a5! 20.♙d3 ♖h4 21.g3 ♖h5 22.a3 axb4 23.axb4 ♙xa1 24.♙xa1 ♙c8±.



White certainly stands nicely, but in the game I failed to break through in a similar position. Forced variations lead to only a small edge after:

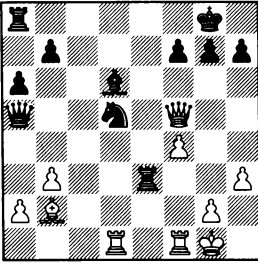
a) 25.♙e4 ♖e6 26.♙xh7+ ♙h8 27.♖c3 ♙e5 28.♖xe5 ♖xe5 29.♙xe5 ♙xh7±. White has a clear extra pawn indeed, but in positions with opposite coloured bishops it is more important to have a strategic rather than a material advantage.

b) 25.♙f5 ♙f8! (after 25...♙xf5 26.♖xf5 ♖g6 27.♖xg6 hxg6 28.♙a6 ♙e6 29.♙a8+ ♙h7 30.♙c8, Black is close to a zugzwang: 30...♙e2 31.♙c3 ♙e7 32.♙f2 f6 33.♙d2 ♙d7 34.♙e3 ♙e7 35.♙f3 ♙d7 36.♙e8±.) 26.♙xc8 ♙xc8 27.♖f5 ♙d8 28.♙c3 ♖g6 29.♖xg6 hxg6 30.♙a6 ♙d3 31.♙a1 ♙b3 32.♙xc6 ♙b1+=.

20.♙ad1 ♖h4 21.♙d3?

It may sound incredible, but I was already short on time and

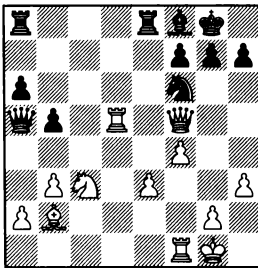
23.♖h2 ♖e2 24.♟b1 ♞e8) 20...
♜xd5



Now 21.♞xd5 ♖xa2 22.♙xg7 does not win in view of 22...♞g3!. it is easy to miss such a move! 23.♞f2 ♖xb3. White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, but I could not find anything decisive.

Therefore, in the diagram position it is probably better to take a small edge in the endgame after 21.♖xd5 ♖xd5 22.♞xd5 ♙c7 23.♞d7 ♙b6 24.♖h2 ♞e2 25.♞xb7 ♙c5 26.♙e5 ♞xa2 27.♞d1 ♙f8 28.♙b8±.

20.♞xd5! b5!



21.♞f3?!

I was understanding that I should simply keep the extra pawn with 21.♞e5 ♖b6 (21...♞ed8 22.♜e4 ♜xe4 23.♖xe4 ♖d2 24.♙d4 ♖xa2 25.♞h5→) 22.♖h2, but the tempta-

tion to face the opponent with concrete problems in his time trouble was too strong to resist.

21...♜xd5?

So he lived up to my expectations and erred! The arrogant rook is a challenging sight indeed, but 21...♞e6 22.♞g3 ♞ae8 23.♞e5! (23.♞d3 g6 24.♖h2 ♞c8 25.♜d5 ♜e4∞) 23...g6 24.♜d5 ♖e1+ 25.♖h2 ♜xd5 (25...♖xg3+ 26.♖xg3 gxf5 27.♜xf6+) 26.♞xe6 ♞xe6 (26...fxe6 27.♞xg6+) 27.♖xd5 ♞xe3= or 21...♙a3 22.♙xa3 ♜xd5 23.♜xd5 ♖xa3 24.♞g3 g6 25.♜f6+ ♖h8 26.♞g5 ♖g7= were keeping the balance.

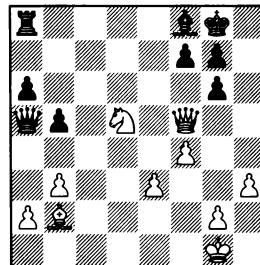
22.♜xd5 ♞e6 23.♜f6+?

A horrible move after which my advantage slips away.

23.♞g3! should be winning. Black has two defences:

a) 23...♞d8 24.♖h2! ♞dd6 (24...♞xd5 25.♖xd5 ♖xa2 26.♙xg7!+- ♞g6 27.♙d4) 25.♜f6+ ♞xf6 26.♙xf6 ♞e6 (26...♖xa2? 27.♞xg7+ ♙xg7 28.♖c8+) 27.♞g5 ♖xa2 28.f5 ♞xf6 29.♖xf6 ♖xb3 30.♖xa6+-.

b) 23...♞g6 24.♞xg6 hxg6



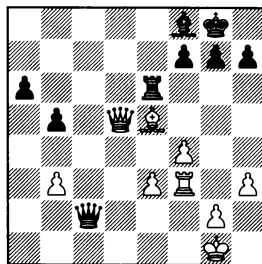
4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♟bd7 6.♞c2 ♟d6 7.♟b2 0-0 8.♟e2!?

25.♟f6+!! ♟h8 26.♞d5!.

I missed this double attack on the rook and the f7-pawn. White has full domination: 26...♞a7 27.♟d4!! ♞c7 (27...gxf6 28.♟xa7 ♟g7 29.a4± is a pawn up) 28.♟d7 ♟g8 29.♟xf8 ♞c1+ 30.♟h2 ♟xf8 31.♞a8+ ♟e7 32.♟b2 (32.♟xg7?! ♞c7= 33.♞xa6 ♞c6) 32...♞c7 (32...♞d1 33.♟xg7 ♞c7 34.♞xa6±) 33.♟xg7, with very good chances to win.

23...♞xf6 24.♟xf6 ♞e8 25.♟e5 (25.♟d4 ♞xa2 26.♞d7=) 25...♞xa2 26.♞d7 ♞e6 27.♞d5 ♞c2!

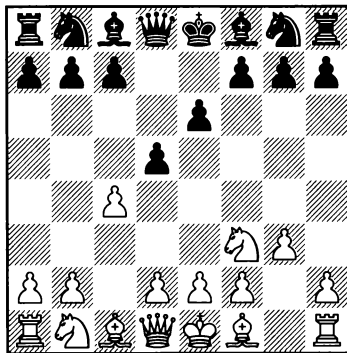
Here my opponent offered me a draw which I should have accepted. The position is objectively level and we both were in time trouble.



28.f5 ♞e8 29.♟d4 ♞c7 30.♞f1 ♞d8 31.♞e4 ♞c8 32.♞g4 ♞d7 33.♞g3? (33.h4! ♟h8 34.h5 f6 35.h6!↑) 33...♟h8 34.h4 f6 35.h5 h6 36.♞f3 a5 37.♞d1 ♞f7 38.e4 ♞e8! 39.♟b2 a4 40.bxa4 bxa4 41.♞d5 ♞b7 42.♟c3 ♞b1+ 43.♞d1 ♟c5+ 44.♟h2? ♞xe4 45.♞xe4 ♞xe4 46.♞d8+ ♟h7 0-1

Anti-Queen's Gambit I

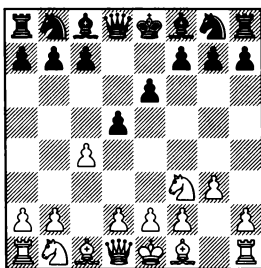
1. ♘f3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3



Main Ideas

In Part 7 and 8 I examine the king's fianchetto against 2...e6:

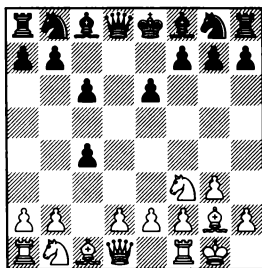
1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3



White can also play 3.d4 if he wanted to avoid the Slav and the Chebanenko, but would be happy with the possible Meran after 3...c6. Another option is 3.e3 ♘f6 4.b3 c5 which is the Semi-Tarrasch.

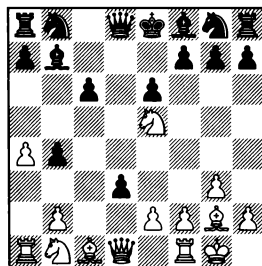
After 3.g3, Black occasionally tries to play in the spirit of the Triangle System:

3...c6 4.♗g2 (4.b3!?) dxc4 5.0-0



White takes over the initiative:

a) **5...b5 6.d3!? cxd3 7.♘e5 ♗b7 8.a4 b4.**

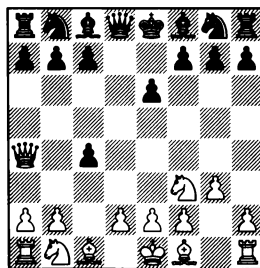


9.a5!? (threatening a6!) 9...♘e7 10.♘xd3 ♘a6 11.♖a4 ♘d5 12.♗d1 ♖c8 13.e4, Pantsulaia-Bareev, Beer-sheba 2005.

b) **5...♘f6 6.a4 ♘a6 7.♘a3 ♗xa3 8.bxa3 ♘c5 9.♗b1.**

The most challenging approach of Black is:

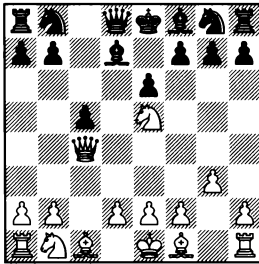
3...dxc4 4.♖a4+



1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3

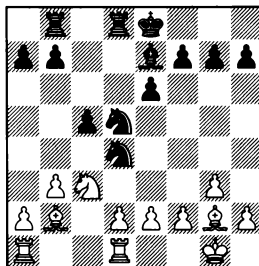
A. 4... ♗d7; B. 4... c6; C. 4... ♖d7.

A. 4... ♗d7 5. ♖xc4 c5 6. ♖e5!?



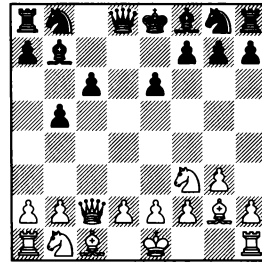
White gains the bishop pair advantage in an open position with a flexible pawn structure. The game Aronian-Kramnik, Khanty Mansiysk 2010, went:

6... ♖c6 7. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 8. ♗g2 ♖f6 9. 0-0 ♗e7 10. ♖a4 ♖d4 11. ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 12. ♖c3 ♗ab8 13. ♗d1 ♗hd8 14. b3 ♗e8 15. ♗b2 ♖d5



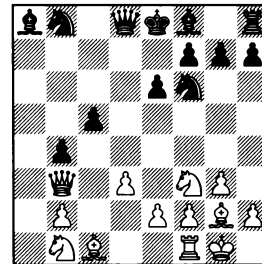
White should seek asymmetric positions so 16. ♖xd5 exd5 17. e3 ♖e6 18. ♗ac1 b5 19. f4 looks consistent.

B. 4... c6 5. ♖xc4 b5 6. ♖c2 ♗b7 7. ♗g2



White's main plan here is to put pressure on the b- and c-pawns.

Here is an example of his strategy: 7... c5 8. a4 a6 9. axb5 axb5 10. ♗xa8 ♗xa8 11. 0-0 ♖f6 12. ♖b3! b4 (12... ♗c6 13. ♖e5) 13. d3±.



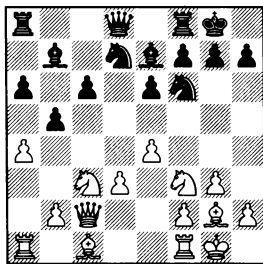
White will later restrict the enemy's pieces with e2-e4 as in **Game 14 Radjabov-Negi**, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

7... ♖f6 8. 0-0 ♖bd7 9. ♖c3 a6!

9... ♗e7 offers White an additional options as 10. d4!?

10. a4! ♗e7 11. d3! 0-0 12. e4

White's set-up is universal and does not depend much on Black's move order.



His plan is to develop his bishop on e3, safeguard it with h3, and bring the rook to d1. Then he will be well prepared for further advancing in the centre or on the kingside.

Black's only counterplay is connected with ...c5-c4.

12...Rc8 13.h3!?

A simple, but effective novelty. Black is lacking a good place for his queen. 13...Qc7 faces 14.g4 e5?! 15.Qxe5 Qxe5 16.d4 Qd6 17.dxe5 Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.f4 Qc5+ 20.Qxf2± while on b6 the queen will also be under the bishop's X-ray: 13...Qb6 14.Qe3 c5 15.axb5 axb5 16.b4!.

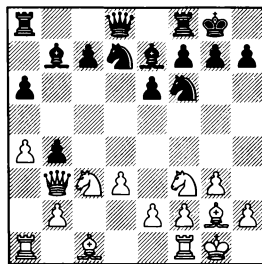
C. 4...Qd7 5.Qg2! Qf6

Black often tries to develop his bishop before White has put Qg2:

5...a6 6.Qxc4 b5.

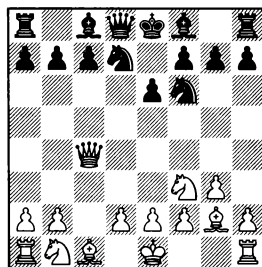
However, this gives White objects to attack on the queenside. Svidler-Kramnik, Moscow 2011, went:

7.Qb3 Qb7 8.0-0 Qgf6 9.Qc3 Qe7 10.d3 0-0 11.a4 b4



I propose here the retreat 12.Qd1!? Qc5 13.Qc2±, when 13...Qd5 14.Qe3 Qb3 15.Qb1± keeps the material balance.

5.Qxc4



The plot of the next few moves is turning around the fate of Black's light-squared bishop. It is not easy to fianchetto it because of the threat of Qd4. Black can try ...a6, b5 or ...b6. We know that the first set-up has the drawback of offering targets on b5 and c5. In practice, Black prefers the more restrained ...b6. Then we should open the centre by d4. Let us consider a few typical lines.

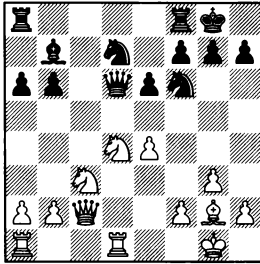
a) 6...a6 7.Qc2! c5 8.Qc3 Qc7

Or 8...Qb8 9.d4 Qd6 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.0-0±; 8...Qa7 9.d4 b6 10.0-0 Qb7 11.e4!? (a natural move)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

11...cxd4 12.♘xd4 ♚a8 13.f3±, followed by ♜fd1.

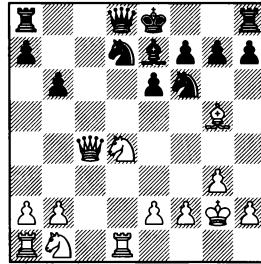
**9.0-0! b6 10.d4 ♖b7 11.♙f4
♙d6 12.♙xd6 ♚xd6 13.♜fd1 0-0
14.e4 cxd4 15.♘xd4±**



White had a space advantage in Kortschnoj-F.Olafsson, Moscow

1971. His plan is to increase it by pushing e5 or b2-b4-b5.

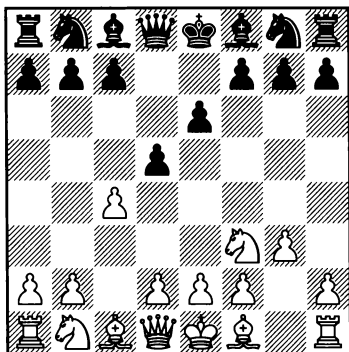
**b) 6...c5 7.0-0 b6 8.d4 ♖b7
9.♜d1 cxd4 10.♙g5 ♙e7 11.♘xd4
♙xg2 12.♙xg2**



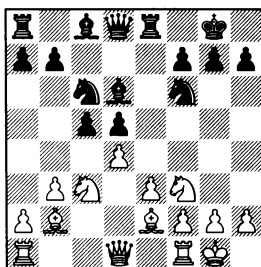
The c6-square and the pawn on a7 are weak.

Step by Step

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3



3.e3 is less effective than it was against 3...c6, because Black can play ...c5 in one step, thus getting a good version of the Semi-Tarrasch. I do not have fresh ideas for White after 3...♠f6 4.b3 c5 5.♙b2 ♠c6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.♠c3 ♙d6 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♞e8 10.d4



10...cxd4! 11.♠xd4 ♠xd4 12.♙xd4 ♙e5 13.♙d2 ♙g4 14.♙xg4 ♠xg4 15.h3 ♠f6 16.♙fd1 ♞c8 17.♞ac1 ♞c6=.

The attempt to get without b3 is countered the same way – Black drags the white knight to d4: 4.♠c3 c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.d4 ♠c6 7.♙e2 cxd4 8.♠xd4 ♙d6=.

3.b3 is inaccurate because Black obtains additional possibilities in comparison to the main line. For instance, after 3...c5 4.♙b2 ♠c6 5.g3, he can play 5...d4 6.♙g2 e5 7.d3 ♙d6.

The king's fianchetto is more enterprising. It may lead to Catalan set-ups, where the delay of d4 restricts Black's options. In fact, White often does not play d4 at all. The Catalan has been extremely popular lately and you can find tons of publications on it. In this book, I will examine only lines which are in the spirit of the Réti.

A. 3...c6; B. 3...g6; C. 3...dxc4.

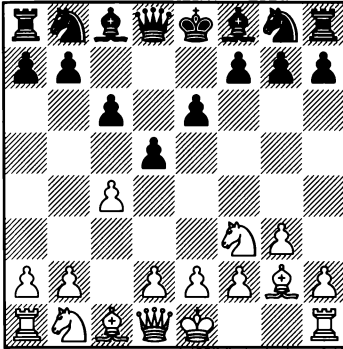
3...♠f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 is the subject of Part 8.

3...c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.d4 leads to the Tarrasch Defence although

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

White can also follow the scheme with b3.

A. 3...c6 4.♟g2

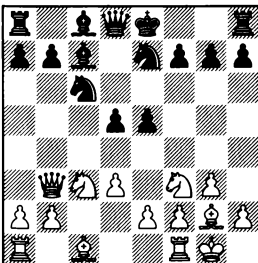


A1. 4...dxc4; A2. 4...♞f6.

4...♟d6 should be met by 5.d4! for two reasons:

1. If White is afraid of the passive, old-fashioned Stonewall that arises after 5...f5, he should not play close openings at all.

2. He has not a better alternative, because 5.0-0 concedes the centre to 5...e5. Marin advocates 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.♞c3 ♞e7 8.♞b3 ♟c7 9.d3, but now he considers only 9...0-0 10.♟g5 ♞bc6. Instead, 9...♞bc6! is fine for Black:



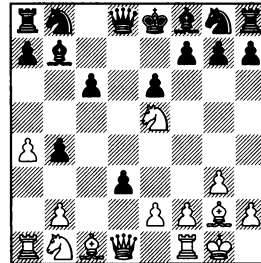
Now Marin's method does not work: 10.♟g5 f6 11.♟d2 ♟e6! when 12.♞xb7? ♞b8 13.♞a6 ♟a5 14.♞b5 ♟c8 favours Black.

A1. 4...dxc4 5.0-0

5.a4 is also possible, but then White should reckon with the variation 5...♞a6 6.♞a3 ♞d5!?, e.g. 7.e4 ♞e6 8.♞e2 ♟xa3.

5...♞f6

5...b5 is consistent, but is it worth to be suffering the next 20-30 moves for only a pawn?! Apart from the thematic 6.a4, White has 6.d3!? cxd3 7.♞e5 ♟b7 8.a4 b4.



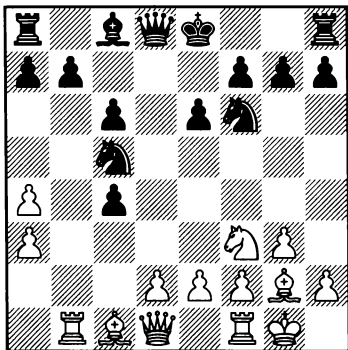
White has two good options here:

a) 9.♞xd3 ♞f6 10.♞d2 ♟e7 11.♞c4 0-0 12.♞c2.

b) 9.a5!? (threatening a6!) 9...♞e7 10.♞xd3 ♞a6 11.♞a4 ♞d5 12.♞d1 ♞c8 13.e4, Pantsulaia-Bareev, Beersheba 2005.

In both variations White has an excellent game.

6.a4 ♖a6 7.♗a3 ♕xa3 8.bxa3
♜c5 9.♞b1



White will soon regain the pawn. In practice, Black fails to neutralise successfully his initiative:

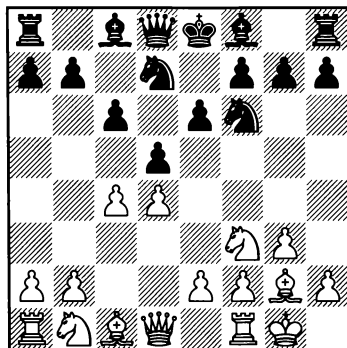
9...0-0 10.♞c2 ♜d5 11.♞xc4 ♞a5 12.d4 ♜xa4 13.♙d2 ♜db6 14.♞d3 ♞h5 15.♞c2±, Stoczek-S.Movsesian, Plzen 2001;

9...♞a5 10.♞b4 c3 11.dxc3 0-0 12.♞c2 ♜d5 13.e4 ♜e7 14.e5 ♞c7 15.h4 ♜d5 16.♞e1→, Hillarp Persson-Dreev, Helsingor 2009.

A2. 4...♜f6 5.0-0

My intention is to play d4 and reach the Closed Catalan. Still, 5.b3 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 is popular and extensively tested in practice. One possible plan is 7.♙b2, d3, ♜bd2, e4, with complex play. Here is one example: 7.♙b2 ♜bd7 8.d3 b5 9.♜bd2 a5 10.a3 ♙b7 11.♞c2 a4 12.b4 bxc4 13.dxc4 c5 14.cxd5 ♙xd5 15.b5±, Maciej-Gelashvili, Kallithea 2008.

5...♜bd7 6.d4



6...♙d6

After 6...dxc4 7.a4 White regains the pawn in a favourable position: 7...♙e7 (or 7...a5 8.♞c2 ♜b6 9.♜bd2 ♜fd5 10.♜xc4 ♜b4 11.♞b3 ♜xc4 12.♞xc4 ♙e7) 8.♜a3.

6...♙e7 leads to the main line of the Closed Catalan. White has the initiative following 7.♞c2 0-0 8.♜bd2 b6 9.e4 or 7.b3 0-0 8.♜c3 b6 9.♜d2.

7.♜c3 0-0 8.♜d2

White breaks through the centre with e4 and obtains a spatial advantage. Practice has seen further:

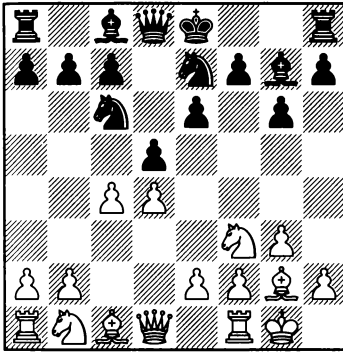
a) 8...♞e8 9.e4 dxe4 10.♜dxe4 ♜xe4 11.♜xe4 ♙e7 12.♙f4 ♜f6 13.c5±, Ivanisevic-Asic, Zupanja 2007.

b) 8...♙c7 9.e4 dxc4 10.♜xc4 e5 11.d5 ♜b6 12.b3 ♜xc4 13.bxc4 ♙d6 14.♞b1±, Miroshnichenko-Gavrilov, Moscow 2008.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

c) 8...♙b4 9.a3 (9.e4 e5 is unclear, but 9.♚b3 a5 10.♞d1, Lautier-Bologan, Enghien les Bains 2001, is a fair alternative.) 9...♙xc3 10.bxc3 b6 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.c4 ♙b7 13.a4±, L.Filip-Olarasu, Albena 2011.

B. 3...g6 4.♙g2 ♙g7 5.0-0 ♟e7 6.d4 ♟bc6



7.♟c3

Marin considers in his *The English Opening, volume 2* only 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♟c3, but I see no reason to open the black light-squared bishop.

7...0-0 8.e3!

We'll exchange on d5 only after Black weakens his queenside:

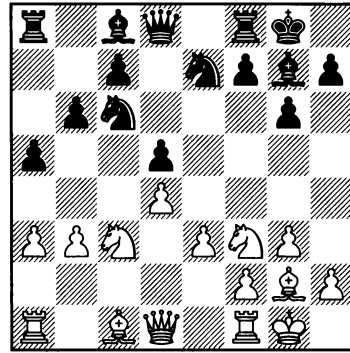
8...b6

8...dxc4 9.♚a4 e5 favours White after 10.♟xe5 ♟xe5 11.dxe5 c6 (11...♙xe5 12.♞d1±) 12.f4!. His pawn cluster in the centre is much more dangerous than the opponent's

pawn majority on the queenside. The game Pridorozhni-Bezgodov, Khanty Mansiysk 2009, went 12...♙e6 13.e4 ♚b6+ 14.♟h1 ♞ad8 15.♟d1 f5 (or 15...♞d3 16.♟f2 ♞d7 17.g4±) 16.♙e3±.

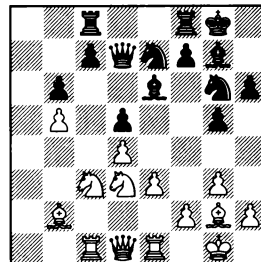
8...a5 does not make much sense either in view of 9.b3 a4 10.♙a3±.

9.cxd5! exd5 10.a3 a5 11.b3



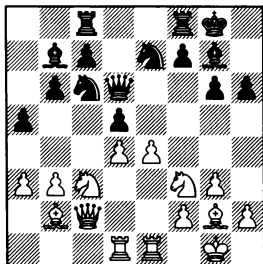
White has a clear plan on the queenside, but his secret and most effective weapon is the breakthrough e3-e4. Then Black will regret his fifth move. Here are two practical examples:

Dorfman-Vaisser, Moscow 1989: 11...h6 12.♟e1 ♙e6 13.♟d3 g5 14.♙b2 ♚d7 15.♞c1 ♞ac8 16.♞e1 ♟g6 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 ♟ce7 19.b5.



The d5-pawn is weak, Black's pieces lack coordination;

Bischoff-Khenkin, Recklinghausen 1996: 11...♙a6 12.♞e1 ♔d6 13.♙b2 h6 14.♞c2 ♞ac8 15.e4 ♙b7 16.♞ad1.



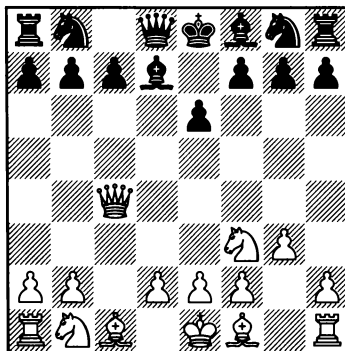
White is ruling in the centre.

C. 3...dxc4 4.♞a4+!

Marin advocates 5.♘a3 in his repertoire trilogy, but I cannot agree with him. After 5...♙xa3 6.bxa3, White practically plays without a queenside. Therefore, he should rely only on a kingside attack to win the game. Accordingly, if Black is not superambitious, he can quickly finish development and castle. That would assure him of a comfortable equality. For example, the game Dominguez-Meier, Lubbock 2011, went on with 6...b5 7.♘e5 ♘d5 8.d3 (Marin's recipe) 8...cxd3 9.♞xd3 0-0 10.♞xb5 ♙a6 11.♞b2 (or 11.♞b3 c5) 11...c5 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♘d7 ♞xd7 14.♞c2 ♞ac8=. Practical results confirm my opinion as 4.♞a4+ scores much better than 4.♘a3.

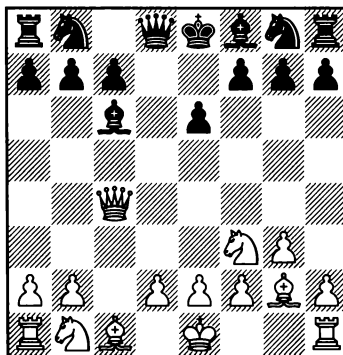
C1. 4...♙d7; C2. 4...c6; C3. 4...♘d7.

C1. 4...♙d7 5.♞xc4



C11. 5...♙c6; C12. 5...c5.

C11. 5...♙c6 6.♙g2



6...♘f6

Black tries occasionally 6...♙d5 when 7.♞a4+ ♞d7 8.♞d1! ♘c6 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.0-0 ♙e7 11.♘d5 exd5 12.d3 0-0 13.♙d2 ♞fe8 14.♞a4 ♙d6 15.♞fe1 ♘e5 16.♞xd7 ♘exd7 17.b4

is slightly better for White. I think that 7.♞c2 ♘c6 8.♞a4! or 7.♞d3! may be even better, for example: 7...♘d7 (7...♘c6 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.♘xd5 exd5 11.♞b3 ♞b8 12.d3 ♞d7 13.♙d2 0-0 14.♞ac1±) 8.0-0 ♘gf6 9.♘c3 ♙c6 10.♞c2±. White will seize the centre with his pawns while Black's counterplay with ...c5 would be hindered by the bishop on c6.

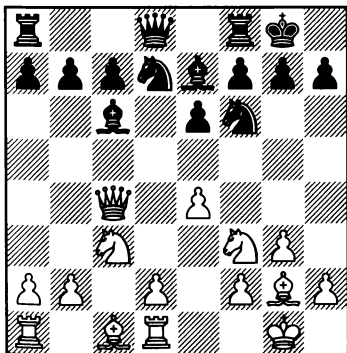
7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♘c3 ♙e7 9.e4!

White restricts the c6-bishop and vacates the e2-square for the queen. Then he will be able to occupy the centre by d2-d4.

9...0-0

9...♘c5 stumbles into 10.d4! ♘cxe4 11.♘e5 ♙d5 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♞b5+.

10.♞d1!

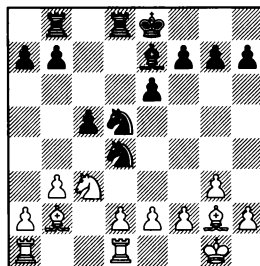


10.♞e2 is a mistake because White loses control over the d4-square after 10...♘c5 11.♘e5 ♞d4!.

The rook move is aimed against this as you can see from the variation 10...♞b8 11.♞e2 ♘c5 12.♘e5 ♞d4 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.d3 – the d3 pawn is protected and Black is unable to prevent d3-d4, e.g. 14...e5 15.♙e3 ♞b4 16.d4 exd4 17.♙xd4 ♞fd8 18.a3±. That's why in Schmidt-Gdanski, Gdansk 1994, Black chose 10...♞b8 11.♞e2 b5, but now 12.e5! ♘d5 13.♘d4 ♙a8 (13...♘xc3 14.dxc3 ♙xg2 15.♙xg2) 14.♘dxb5 gave White a clear edge.

C12. 5...c5 6.♙g2

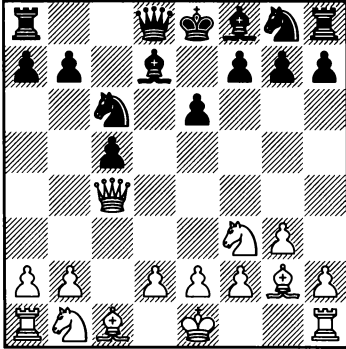
6.♘e5!? is more simple and it may be the better choice. The game Aronian-Kramnik, Khanty Mansiysk 2010, went 6...♘c6 7.♘xd7 ♞xd7 8.♙g2 ♘f6 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.♞a4 ♘d4 11.♞xd7+ ♙xd7 12.♘c3 ♞ab8 13.♞d1 ♞hd8 14.b3 ♙e8 15.♙b2 ♘d5



White has the bishop pair advantage in an open flexible pawn formation. In general, he should seek asymmetric positions so 16.♘xd5 exd5 17.e3 ♘e6 18.♞ac1 b5 19.f4 looks consistent.

6...♘c6

6...♙c6 7.0-0 ♘d7 8.♘c3 ♖gf6 9.e4 b5 10.♘xb5 ♙xe4 11.d4 ♙d5, as in Stellwagen-Sargissian, Porto Carras 2011, should be met by 12.♗e2 ♙e7 13.♘c3 ♙c6 (13...0-0 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 16.b3) 14.dxc5 ♙xc5 15.♙f4.



7.0-0

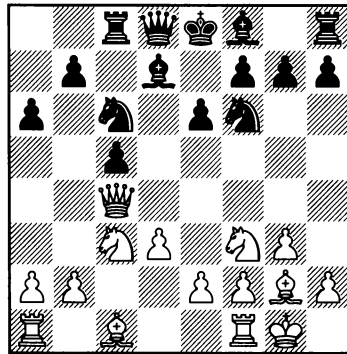
White cannot save a tempo on 0-0 with 7.♘c3 due to 7...♙c8!. Note that 7...♘f6 is possibly inaccurate. White has some initiative following 8.d4 b5 9.♗d3 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘e5 11.♗d1 b4 12.♘e4 ♘xe4 13.♙xe4 ♙c8 14.0-0 ♙e7 15.♙f4 ♘g6 16.♙e3±.

7...♙c8

7...♘f6 8.d4 transposes to a well known variation of the Catalan. Practical results suggest that White retains a small edge after 8...♙c8 9.dxc5 or 8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♙c8 10.♘c3 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♙c5 12.♗h4 0-0 13.♙xb7 ♙b8 14.♙f3 ♙b4 15.♗g5 ♙d4 16.♗d2 ♗c7 17.♘d1, Kramnik-Naiditsch, Dortmund 2010, or 8...b5 9.♗d3 ♙c8 10.dxc5.

The text is more critical for the assessment of this line. Now 8.d4 b5 9.♗d3 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♘f6 12.♙g5 (12.♗xa7 ♙c5 13.♗b7 ♘d5 14.♙xd5 ♙c7 is a draw; 12.♘d2 ♙c5 13.♗d3 0-0 14.♘e4 ♙c6 15.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16.♙xc6 ♙xc6 17.♗xb5 ♙fc8) 12...♙c5 13.♗h4 0-0 14.♘c3 h6 is about equal. The plan with d4 is also insufficient after 8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.d4 b5 10.♗d3 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♙c5 13.♗d3 b4 14.♘e4 ♘xe4 15.♙xe4 ♗b6 16.a4 bxa3 17.bxa3 ♙b5=. Perhaps White can try to put pressure on c5 with:

8.♘c3 ♘f6 9.d3 a6



10.b3!?

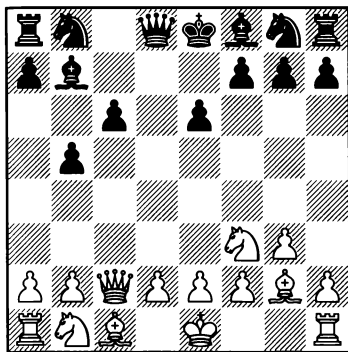
The game Velickovic-Sveshnikov, Murska Sobota 2007, saw 10.♘e4 b5 11.♘xf6+ ♗xf6, when 12.♗b3 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 cxd4 14.a4 (14.♙d2 ♙d6 15.♙fc1 0-0) 14...♙d6 15.axb5 ♙xb5 16.♙d2 0-0 17.♙fc1 is close to equal.

10...♙e7 11.♙b2 b5 12.♗f4

As long as c4 is under control, White's game is easier.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

**C2. 4...c6 5.♞xc4 b5 6.♞c2
♟b7 7.♟g2**



We have reached the same pawn structure as we already examined in Part 1. The fianchetto of the light-squared bishop does not change White's general plan. He will attack the b5-pawn, trying to drag it to b4. That would concede the c4-square and would assure White of a lasting pressure in the centre. Here is an example of White's strategy: 7...c5 8.a4 a6 9.axb5 axb5 10.♞xa8 ♟xa8 11.0-0 ♟f6 (11...♟c6 12.♟c3 ♟b4 13.♞d1) 12.♞b3! b4 (12...♟c6 13.♟e5) 13.d3±.

7...♟f6 8.0-0 ♟bd7 9.♟c3

Following the main Réti strategy – to be flexible and keep all options open. Depending on Black's moves, we could open the centre by d4, or play on restriction by d3-e4.

Occasionally, White inserts 9.a4 first, hoping to provoke ...b4?!. The correct answer is 9...a6. Black may try to deviate with 9...♞c8, but it allows 10.d4!?. Besides, 10.♟c3

should probably still transpose to the main line, or even 10.d3 ♟e7 11.♟c3 because 11...b4?! 12.♟b1! c5 13.♟bd2 0-0, as in Chuchelov-Postny, Belgium 2008, would be pleasant for White after 14.a5±.

Note that 9.d4?! c5 gives Black nice counterplay in the centre.

9...a6!

Black prepares ...c5. Alternatives are:

a) 9...♟e7. This mundane development is inaccurate due to:

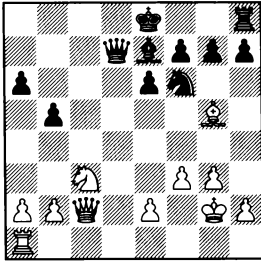
10.d4!

Game 14 Radjabov-Negi, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, saw 10.e4!? b4 11.♟a4 c5 12.d3 ♞c8 13.b3 ♟b6 14.♟b2 and White fulfilled the positional aim of the opening – the critical square c4 is in his full control. Perhaps Black should have tried the pawn sac 12...c4 13.♞xc4 ♞a5 14.♞c2 (14.b3 ♞c8 15.♞d4 ♟xe4 16.♟b2 ♟f6 17.♞e3 ♟c3) 14... ♞c8 15.♞d1 0-0, with some (albeit insufficient) compensation.

10...a6 11.♞d1

The thematic 11.♟e4 is also good: 11...♟xe4 12.♞xe4 ♟f6 (or 12...♞b8 13.♞g4! 0-0 14.♟h6 ♟f6 15.♟f4 ♞c8 16.e4!) 13.♞c2 ♞b6 14.♟d2! (14.♟e5!?) 14...0-0 15.♟b3±, Vaulin-Rabiega, Katowice 1993.

11...c5 (11...0-0 12.♟e5±) 12.dxc5 ♟xc5 13.♟e5 ♟xg2 14.♟xg2 ♞a7 15.f3 ♞c8 16.♟xd7 ♞xd7 17.♞xd7 ♞xd7 18.♟g5 ♟e7.



Black is several tempos behind in development and it is not easy for him to find a stable place for his queen. The game Gharamian-Libiszewski, Chartres 2005, went on 19.♙xf6 gxf6 20.♘e4 0-0 21.♞d1 ♜c8, when best would have been 22.♞c1±. Even better is 19.♞d1! ♜c7 (19...♜c6 20.♞d2 0-0 21.♘d5±) 20.♞c1! having in mind to meet 20...0-0 by 21.♘d5±.

The bottom line is: if Black does not play ...a6 early, White seizes the centre with d4, because the thematic break ...c5 does not work.

b) 9...♞c8. This move discourages 10.d4 owing to 10...c5!, but 10.d3! should transpose to the main line after 10...a6 11.a4 ♙e7 while 10...♙e7 11.a4 b4?! 12.♘b1 c5 13.♘d2 0-0 14.a5! was better for White in Choma-Fier, Balneario Camboriu 2005.

10.a4!

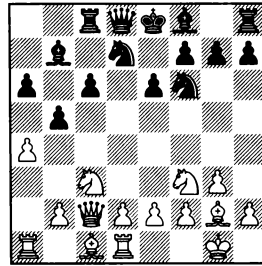
It is necessary to keep an eye on b5 or Black will favourably open his b7-bishop with ...c5.

10...♙e7

10...♞c8 could transpose to the main line after 11.d3, but White has an even better option:

11.♞d1!

The same insidious rook move as in the main line of Part 1. White prepares d4 which was not good right away due to 11.d4 b4 12.♘e4 c5.



Let us examine Black's options here:

a) 11...♜b6 12.d4 c5 13.axb5 axb5

Black's two moves with major pieces neglected the development of his kingside so the inevitable opening of the centre spells trouble for him.

14.♙e3!

White had a tiny edge after 14.♜b3 cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♙xg2 16.♙xg2 b4 17.♘a4 ♜b7+ 18.♜f3 ♜xf3+ 19.♘xf3, Stanojoski-Lupulescu, Dresden 2008, but the text practically wins a pawn.

14...♙e7

14...♘g4 further delays development. White is able to choose be-

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

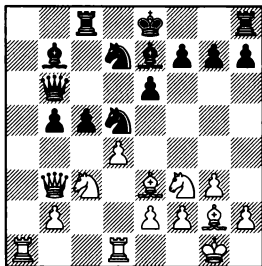
tween 15.♞d2 ♘xe3 16.♞xe3± and 15.dxc5 ♙xc5 (15...♘xe3 16.cxb6! ♘xc2 17.♞a7 ♞b8 18.♞xd7 ♔xd7 19.♘e5+ ♔c8 20.♘xf7±) 16.♞d3 0-0 17.♙xc5 ♞xc5 (17...♙xc5 18.♞d4) 18.♞d4, with a very active rook after 18...♙xf3 19.exf3 ♘gf6 20.♞xc5 ♞xc5 21.♞a7±.

15.♞b3!

Attacking the b5-pawn before Black has castled. Now 15...♙c6 16.♘e5! c4 17.d5! or 16...♙xg2 17.♔xg2 ♞b7 18.f3 ♘d5 19.♘xd5 exd5 20.♞a5! are bad for him.

The best option is to give up a pawn with a dubious compensation:

15...♘d5

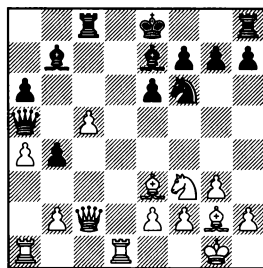


White's pieces are better mobilised. He can eliminate to a better endgame with 16.♞xb5 ♞xb5 17.♘xb5 ♘xe3 18.fxe3 0-0 19.♞a7 ♞b8 20.♘e1 ♙xg2 21.♞xd7 ♙d5 22.♞xe7 ♞xb5 23.dxc5 ♞xb2 24.♔f2 ♞c8 25.♞a7± ♞b5 26.e4! ♙xe4 27.♞c7 ♞bb8 28.♞dd7 or keep more tension with 16.dxc5 ♙xc5 17.♙xc5 ♞xc5 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.♞d3 ♘f6 20.♞d4 0-0 21.b4±, e.g. 21...♞c6 22.♘e5 ♞xd4 23.♞xd4 ♞c2 24.e4.

b) 11...b4 12.♘e4 ♘xe4 13.♞xe4 ♞c7 14.♘e1! ♘f6 15.♞c4 c5 16.b3 ♙xg2 17.♔xg2 ♞b7+ 18.f3 ♙e7 19.♘d3±. Black failed to organise any counterplay and remained with his backward pawn on c5.

c) 11...♙e7 12.d4! 0-0

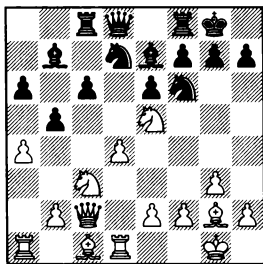
An alternative is 12...b4 13.♘e4 c5 14.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 15.dxc5 ♞a5 16.♙e3±



Such positions are commonly unpleasant for Black. His queenside pawns are vulnerable, and he needs to spend two tempos on castling and making a *luft*. Now 16...♙xc5 17.♙xc5 ♞xc5 18.♞d3 0-0 19.♘d4 would be gloom for him.

Berczes-Venkatesh, Dresden 2011, saw 16...0-0 17.♘d2 ♙xg2 18.♔xg2 ♘g4 when best would have been 19.♘b3 ♘xe3+ 20.fxe3 ♞c7 21.♞ac1 ♞c6+ 22.♔f2 ♞xa4 23.♞c4±. Instead, 19.♞e4 ♘xe3+ 20.♞xe3 ♞xc5 21.♞xc5 ♞xc5 22.♞ac1 ♞d8 23.♘b3 ♞xd1 24.♞xd1 ♞c7 (24...♞c2 25.♞d2 ♞c4±) 25.♞c1 also retained some advantage which Berczes eventually went on to convert.

13.♘e5! (anticipating ...c5)



13...♖b6

13...♖c7 14.♙f4 ♘d6 15.axb5 axb5 16.♙a7±, Andreikin-Grachev, Moscow 2010, is obviously unacceptable, but 13...♜xe5!? 14.dxe5 ♜d5 15.♜e4 c5 (15...♖c7 16.♙g5) 16.axb5 axb5 17.♜c3 b4 18.♜e4 c4 19.♜d6 ♙xd6 20.exd6 f5 21.♙f4 ♙f7 22.♙e5 is not so clear.

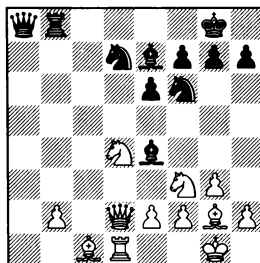
After 13...♖b6, best is 14.♜xd7! ♜xd7 15.♙e3 ♜f6 (15...c5 16.d5) 16.♜e4, with an edge. Instead, Giri-Menezes, Vienna 2011, saw 14.♙g5 ♙fe8?! 15.♜xd7 ♜xd7 16.♙xe7 ♙xe7 17.b4±. Black could have tried 14...♜xe5!? with drawing chances in the endgame arising after 15.dxe5 ♜g4 16.♙xe7 ♖xf2+ 17.♜h1 c5 18.♜e4 ♖xg2+ 19.♜xg2 ♜e3+ 20.♜f2 ♜xc2 21.♜xc5 ♜xa1 22.♜xb7 ♙fe8 23.♜d6 ♜b3 24.♜xc8 ♙xc8 25.♙d6 bxa4 26.♙xa6 h6 27.♙xa4±.

11.d3!

In this order of moves, 11.d4 0-0 allows Black to solve the opening problems by an interesting pawn sacrifice:

a) 12.♙d1 c5! 13.axb5 axb5 14.♙xa8 ♖xa8 15.♜xb5 ♙e4 16.♖d2

cx d4 17.♜bxd4 ♙b8, Svidler-Gelfand, Moscow 2011.

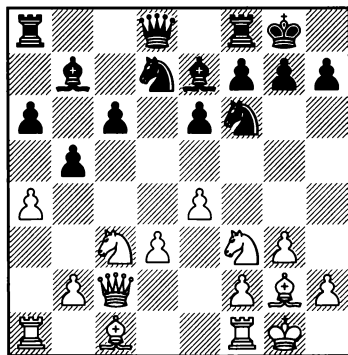


Similar positions arise in some lines of the QGA. White usually cannot make any progress from this point.

b) 12.♙g5 c5! 13.axb5 (13.♜e5 ♙xg2 14.♜xg2 cxd4 15.♜c6 ♙e8 16.♜e4 ♙c8 17.axb5 axb5 18.♙fc1 ♜h8 19.♙a7 ♜e5 20.♙xe7 ♖xc6 21.♙xf6 ♖xc2 22.♙xc2 gxf6 23.♙xc8 ♙xc8=) 13...axb5 14.dxc5 ♙xc5 15.♙xa8 ♖xa8 16.♜xb5 ♙c8±. We see the same scenario as in the previous line.

It seems that this method of equalising against d4 works well if Black has not lost a tempo on ...♙c8.

11...0-0 12.e4



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

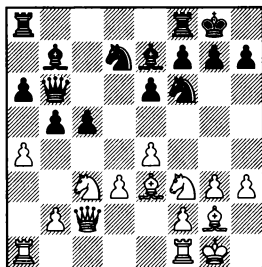
White's plan is to develop his bishop on e3, safeguarding it with h3, and bring the rook to d1. Then he will be well prepared for further advancing in the centre or on the kingside.

Black's only activity is connect- ed with ...c5, so his most natural and flexible continuation is:

12...♞c8

a) 12...c5 turned out to be over- optimistic in Shimanov-Goganov, St. Petersburg 2011: 13.axb5 axb5 14.♞xa8 ♞xa8 15.♟xb5 c4 16.dxc4 ♟xe4 17.♞e2 ♟e5 18.♟xe5 ♟xc4 19.♞d1 ♟c5 20.♟e3 ♞e4, when 21.♞d3! ♞xe5 22.♟xc5 ♞xc5 23.♟xg2 would have given White the upper hand.

b) 12...♞b6 defines Black's plans one move too early. This could al- low White to save a tempo on ♞d1 after 13.♟e3 c5 14.h3



White is slightly better because the pawn couple on b5-c5 will be vulnerable after b2-b4:

14...♞fc8 15.♞fc1! ♟c6 (15...♞c6 is not a safer place for the queen due to ♟d2-b3-a5) 16.b4;

14...♞ac8 15.axb5 axb5 16.b4! transposes to the main line.

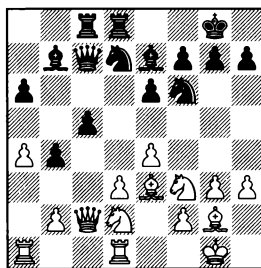
13.h3!?

I propose this novelty because 13.♟e3, as played in Ivanchuk- Grischuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, allows 13...♟g4 14.♟f4, when the engines suggest 14...b4 15.♟e2 g5 16.♟d2 c5↑.

Practice has also seen:

13.♞d1 ♞b6

The b6-square is undoubtedly the best place for the queen. The game Shimanov-Naiditsch, Stock- holm 2011, featured 13...♞c7 14.h3 ♞fd8 15.♟e3 b4 16.♟b1 c5 17.♟bd2



It seems that White has achieved all he wanted from the opening. He needs only to put ♟c4 to be thor- oughly happy, so the next move looks consistent: 17...c4!?

This thematic sac often enables Black to miraculously disentangle his pieces. The stem game went on with 18.♟xc4?! ♟xe4 19.dxe4 ♞xc4 20.♞xc4 ♞xc4=. Critical is, how- ever:

18.♞xc4 when the endgame af- ter 18...♞xc4 19.♟xc4 ♟xe4 20.♟b6 ♟xb6 would be better for White.

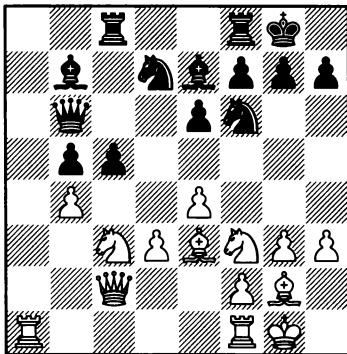
18...♖b8!? deserves attention, but still 19.♖b3 ♘c5 20.♙xc5 (20. ♖xb4 ♙xd3 21.♙ac1 ♘fxe4 22.♘xe4 ♙xd1+ 23.♙xd1 ♙xe4 24.♖xb8 ♙xb8 25.♘e5 f6 26.♘d7 ♘xd7 27.♙xd7 ♙xg2 28.♙xg2 ♙b4=) 20...♙xc5 21.♘c4 ♖a7 22.♖c2 ♙d6 23.♙h2 leaves White with a healthy extra pawn, e.g. 23...♙c5 24.♙d2.

After 13...♖b6 14.♙e3 c5 15. 15.axb5 axb5 16.h3 ♙fd8, White chose in Almasi-Robson, Lubbock 2010, 17.♙dc1 (17.b4!) which strongly suggests that White's rook is not that useful on d1. On the other hand, h3 looks indispensable anyway.

13...♖b6

13...♖c7 hardly deserves attention since White has 14.♙f4 when 14...e5?! fails to 15.♘xe5 ♘xe5 16.d4 ♙d6 17.dxe5 ♙xe5 18.♙xe5 ♖xe5 19.f4 ♖c5+ 20.♖f2±.

14.♙e3 c5 15.axb5 axb5 16.b4!



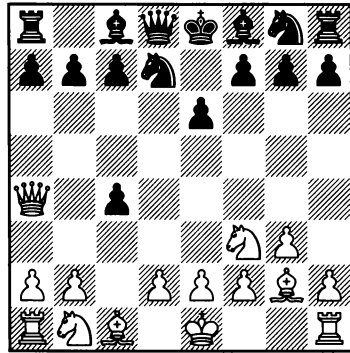
White's pieces are more stable, the b5-pawn is hanging. For example:

16...e5 17.♖b1 ♙c6 18.♙c1;

16...♖c6 17.♖b1! cxb4 18.♘d4 ♖xc3 19.♙c1, winning the queen.

In both variations we needed the king's rook on c1 but not on d1.

C3. 4...♘d7 5.♙g2!



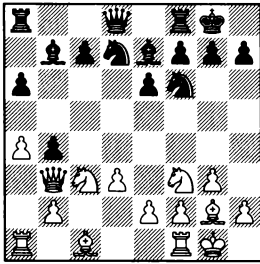
This move order is more accurate than 5.♖xc4 which would allow Black to fianchetto the bishop with 5...b6!? 6.♙g2 ♙b7. Compared to the main line, White has not a lever on the queenside which the b5-pawn provides.

5...♘f6

5...a6 6.♖xc4 b5 is also topical. Perhaps White should retreat here to b3 in order to pressurise the b5-pawn:

7.♖b3 ♙b7 8.0-0 ♘gf6 9.♘c3 ♙e7 10.d3 0-0 11.a4 b4

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

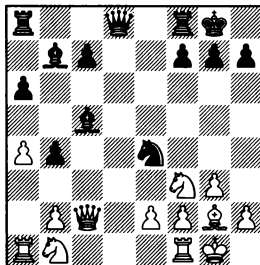


11...♞c5 12.♞c2 b4 transposes to Svidler-Kramnik while:

11...♞b8 12.axb5 axb5 13.♙d2 b4 14.♞d1 c5 15.♞e3 ♟b6 16.♞e5 ♙xg2 17.♙xg2 ♞c7 18.♞3c4 allows White to achieve his strategic aim.

12.♞d1?

The very interesting game Svidler-Kramnik, Moscow 25.11.2011, saw 12.♞b1 ♞c5 13.♞c2 e5!? (or 13...♙d5 14.♞bd2 b3 15.♞c3 ♞b8 16.♞c4±) 14.♙e3 (14.♞xe5? loses a piece to 14...♙xg2 15.♙xg2 ♞d5+ 16.♞f3 ♞b3) 14...e4 15.♙xc5 ♙xc5 16.dxe4 ♞xe4

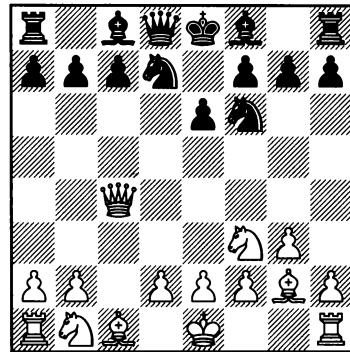


Svidler suggests here 17.e3! with a better pawn structure. He chose instead 17.♞fd2, but the bold 17...♙xf2+! 18.♞xf2 ♞xf2 19.♙xb7 ♞g4 gave Black sufficient counterplay.

12...♞c5 13.♞c2±

The fine point of my idea is that 13...♙d5 14.♞e3 ♙b3 15.♞b1± keeps the material balance since 15...♞xa4 (15...♙xa4 16.d4; 15...♞d5 16.d4 ♞d7 17.♞d3 ♞xe3 18.♙xe3 ♙d5 19.♞fc1 a5 20.♞d2±) loses to 16.♞d2. Another option is 13...e5 as in Svidler-Kramnik, but then we can snatch the pawn: 14.♞xe5 ♙xg2 15.♙xg2 ♞d5+ 16.♞f3 ♞b3 17.♞b1 ♞d4 18.♞c4 ♞xc4 19.dxc4.

6.♞xc4



C31. 6...a6; C32. 6...c5.

C31. 6...a6

This move could turn out to be a waste of time. White can open the centre to use his significant lead in development.

7.♞c2!

Discouraging 7...b5 due to 8.♞e5, and hindering the fianchetto of Black's bishop.

7...c5 8.♖c3 ♜c7

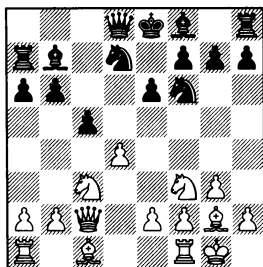
Alternatives are:

a) 8...♜b8 9.d4 ♘d6 (9...cxd4 10.♗xd4 ♘c5 11.♗b3 ♘d6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♞d1 ♜c7 14.♙e3±) 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.0-0±.

b) 8...♞a7 (freeing a8 for the queen) 9.d4

9.0-0 b5 10.d3 also deserves attention.

9...b6 10.0-0 ♙b7



White's game is easier. Exchanges only increase his advantage because the possible invasion squares c6 and d6 lose their defenders. On the other hand, White should also fight for tempos so 11.dxc5 would not be precise. He should take on c5 after ...♙d6 or make Black play ...cxd4 which would activate the f3-knight. Possible continuations are:

b1) 11.♙e3 ♜a8 12.♞fd1! cxd4

Further fight for tempo with 12...h6 is risky, because White has a more useful move: 13.♞ac1 ♙e7 (13...♗g4 14.♙f4 cxd4 15.♗a4 e5 16.♙h3+-) 14.dxc5 ♘xc5 15.♙xc5 ♗xc5 16.b4 ♗cd7 17.e4 0-0 18.♗d4±.

13.♙xd4 ♙e7 14.♗a4±.

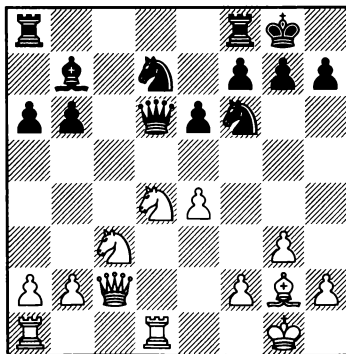
b2) 11.e4!?. This is more natural. 11...cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♜a8.

Here in Hertneck-Schlosser, Austria 2005, was 13.♞e1 ♙e7! [13...♙b4 14.a3 ♘xc3 15.♜xc3 0-0 (15...♗xe4 16.♙xe4 ♙xe4 17.♞xe4) 16.f3 ♞c8 17.♜e3±, Skembris-Malakhatko, Porto Mannu 2009.] when White found nothing better than 14.f3. Obviously, 13.f3±, followed by ♞fd1, would have been better.

9.0-0!

This is more cunning than 9.d4, because then Black can play the active 9...b5 10.♙f4 ♜a7 11.d5 ♗xd5 12.♗xd5 exd5 as in Szabo-Keres, Winnipeg 1967, when 13.a4± leads to a messy game. The text discourages 9...b5 in view of 10.a4 b4 11.♗d1 followed by b3, ♗b2, d3. We already know this structure from line C2.

9...b6 10.d4 ♙b7 11.♙f4 ♘d6 12.♙xd6 ♜xd6 13.♞fd1 0-0 14.e4 cxd4 15.♗xd4±



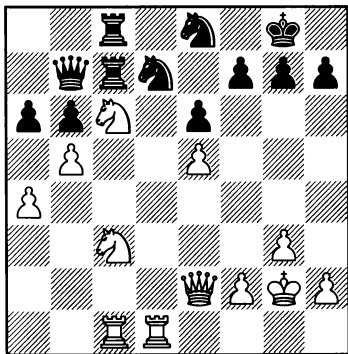
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

White has reached a typical position with an initiative for him. He has more space and his plan is to increase this advantage by pushing e5 or b2-b4-b5. Follow the model of Kortschnoj-F.Olafsson, Moscow 1971:

15...♞c7 (15...♞e7 16.♞e2) **16.♞e2 ♠a7 17.♠ac1 ♞b8 18.a4 ♟a8 19.b4! ♠c8 20.b5** (claiming the outpost on c6) **20...♠ac7 21.e5 ♟xg2**

21...♠xc3 loses to 22.♠xc3 ♠xc3 23.♟c6 and the weakness of the last rank is decisive.

22.♟xg2 ♞b7+ (22...♟e8 23.♟c6 ♞a8 24.♞e4 ♟c5 25.♞b4±) **23.♟c6** (23.f3±) **23...♟e8**



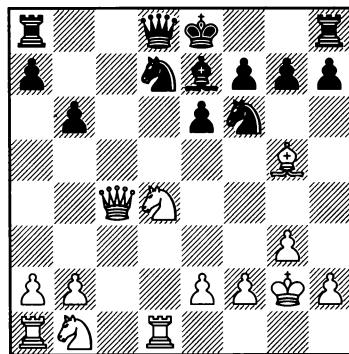
Compare the two diagrams! Without having committed any serious mistake, Black is totally dominated. Now 24.♟a2±, heading for b4, would have crowned Kortschnoj's strategy.

C32. 6...c5 7.0-0

7.♞b3!? is much more popular, but 7...♠b8 allows Black to fianchetto his bishop.

7.d3 ♟d6 looks equal. The text is more simple and consistent. White does not spend tempos on finesses, but he stakes on better development.

7...b6 8.d4 ♟b7 9.♠d1 cxd4 10.♟g5 ♟e7 11.♟xd4 ♟xg2 12.♟xg2



White is obviously better, Aro-nian-Gelfand, Nice 2010. The c6-square and the a7-pawn are weak.

12...♠c8 would not be of much help due to 13.♞a4 ♞c7 14.♟c3 0-0 15.♟db5 ♞b7+ 16.f3 a6 17.♟d6± so Gelfand kept his rook on a8:

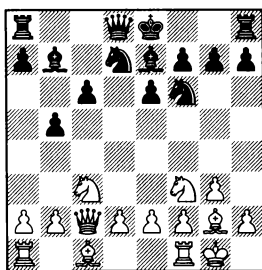
12...♞c8 and went on to gradually equalise after 13.♟d2?! h6. White should send his queen's knight to another route: 13.♞xc8+ ♠xc8 14.♟c3! 0-0 15.♟cb5 a6 16.♟a7 ♠c7 17.♠ac1±, underlining the weakness of c6.

Complete Games

14. Radjabov–Negi Khanty–Mansiysk 31.08.2011

This game is a fine example of how to exploit the weakness of the c4-square in the typical pawn structure with a backward black pawn on c5.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5
4.♙g2 dxc4 5.♚a4+ c6 6.♚xc4 b5
7.♚c2 ♙b7 8.0-0 ♘bd7 9.♘c3 ♙e7



10.e4

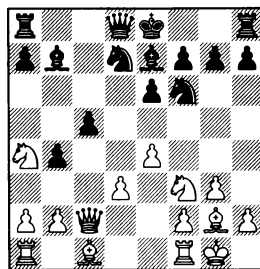
Black's last move does not prepare ...c6-c5 so White can answer 10.d4!?. Radjabov has another set-up in mind. He restricts the b7-bishop with e4-d3 and will try bind the opponent with the defence of the c-pawn.

10...b4?

This is an instructive positional mistake. Black can accept this pawn structure only if he had a concrete variation in mind. It is possible that Black will have to play it later, but only after White had put in a4. Even then, the concession of the c4-square should be a major flaw of Black's position, but at least White would not be able to open the a-file.

10...a6 also seems inaccurate in view of 11.d4 c5 12.d5 exd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.exd5 0-0 15.d6 ♙f6 16.♘g5±. Perhaps Black should have castled. Then 11.d4 would be no longer scary due to 11...b4 12.♘a4 c5.

11.♘a4 c5 12.d3



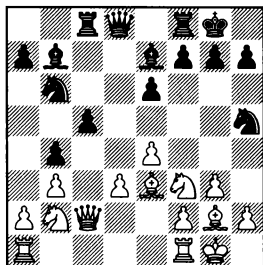
12...♖c8?

After this reckless move, Black's

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

queenside gets into a positional vice. I would prefer to throw in a pawn, but keep my pieces active. For instance: 12...c4 13.♞xc4 ♞a5 14.♞c2 ♞c8. It is true that White retains the extra pawn, e.g. 15.♞d1 0-0 16.a3 bxa3 17.b3 ♞fd8 18.♙xa3 ♙xa3 19.♞xa3 ♞b4 20.♞a1± ♟e8 21.♞a2 ♟d6, but it is usually very difficult to convert the b-pawn in such positions.

13.b3 ♟b6 14.♟b2 0-0 15.♙f4 ♟h5 16.♙e3



16...♞c7

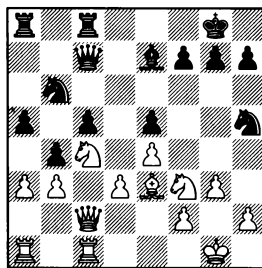
Black looks completely at a loss. In my opinion, he should seek counterplay at any cost so 16...f5 is indispensable. White would have an edge after 17.a3! ♟f6 18.axb4 (18.♟e5!? ♙d6 19.♟bc4 ♙b8 20.♞fd1±) 18...fxe4 19.♟g5, but at least both armies would be in a direct conflict, so White would be prone to mistakes.

Play might continue with 19...♟fd5 20.♟xe6 ♟xe3 21.fxe3 cxb4 22.♟c4 ♞xf1+ 23.♙xf1 ♞d7 24.♞a7 (24.♟f4 exd3 25.♞xd3 ♞a8±) 24...♞xe6 25.♞xb7 ♟xc4 26.dxc4 ♙c5 27.♞d2±.

17.a3 a5 18.♞fc1 ♞fd8 19.♞e2

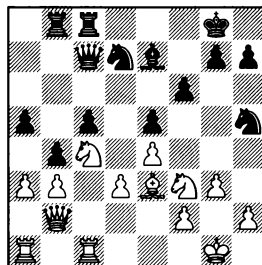
19.axb4 axb4 20.♞a7 ♞b8 21.♞ca1± was quite good, but White wants to provoke another weakness. In many variations he will have d4, e.g. 19...♞a8 20.♙xc5 ♙xc5 21.d4± so Black's response looks forced.

19...e5 20.♙h3 ♞a8 21.♞c2 ♙c8 22.♙xc8 ♞dxc8 23.♟c4



White's strategy has triumphed. The opponent has not a single active piece.

23...♟d7 24.♞a2 ♞ab8 25.♞b2 f6



26.♙d2?!

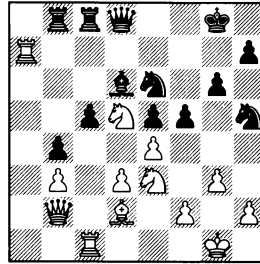
Radjabov was obviously feasting his eyes on the position and did not

want to alter it. This often slips a great deal of the advantage. His minor pieces are already perfect. He only needs to invade the opponent's camp with a heavy piece. Stayed his pawn on a4, his edge would have been only little and he should have sought to open a second front in the centre or on the kingside. In the actual position, however, he had the obvious 26.axb4 axb4 27.♖a6 ♖a8 28.♗a2±, accelerating the pace of the game.

26...g6 27.♘e1 ♘f8 28.♘e3
♗d8 29.♘d5 ♘e6 30.axb4 axb4
31.♖a7 ♙d6 32.♘c2 f5 33.♘ce3

Things have changed. Black already have a gorgeous knight which counterbalances the d5-one. White

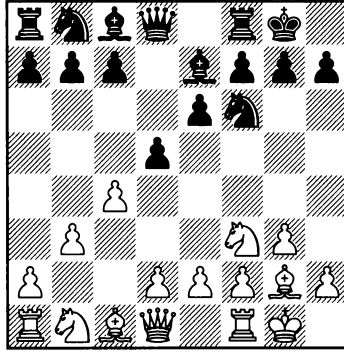
still owns the initiative, though, thanks to his active rook. Therefore, Negi should aim to trade it and 33...♖a8 34.♖ca1 ♘d4 served well this goal. However, he misses his chance and his position deteriorates again.



33...♘d4?! 34.♖ca1 f4? 35.♘c4
♘f6 36.♖1a6 ♖c6 37.♖xc6 ♘xc6
38.♖a6 ♖c8 39.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 40.♙xf4
♗e6 41.♙e3 ♙f8 42.♘a5 1-0

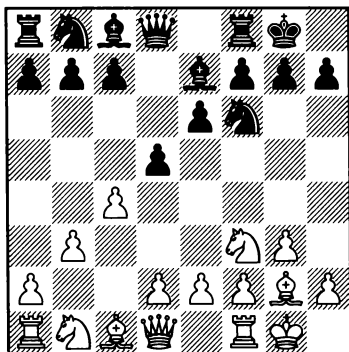
Anti-Queen's Gambit II

1. ♘f3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♗g2 ♗e7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3



Main Ideas

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2
♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



I had a very difficult choice to make between the Catalan with 6.d4 and the Réti-style 6.b3. In practice, players' preferences are divided almost equally between the two options. In my opinion, Black is very close to equality in the Catalan, with accurate play. The focus in this opening is on the endgame so one needs good technique and subtle positional understanding.

Eventually, I chose to advocate 6.b3. It is more flexible and allows different move orders. At the same time, the strategic ideas are clear and easy to play even by beginners.

A repertoire with 6.b3 can also be a bonus against other popular openings. Here are two examples:

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2
♗b7 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.b3 0-0 7.♗b2 c5
8.e3 d5 9.♘c3;

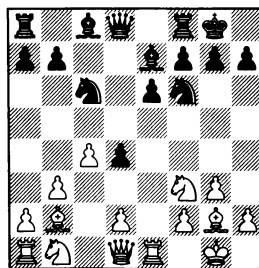
1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2
♗b7 5.0-0 e6 6.b3 ♗e7 7.♗b2 0-0
8.e3 d5 9.♘c3.

You see that this set-up could be used to avoid the Hedgehog and the main lines of the Queen's Indian.

Black has two main approaches against 6.b3. One of them is to define the pawn structure by taking on c4 – set-up A. The other one is to maintain the tension in the centre and leave White to exchange on d5. I'll consider it as set-up B. In both cases Black fianchettoes his light-squared bishop.

Much less often Black chooses the reversed Modern Benoni:

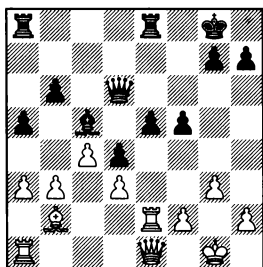
6...c5 7. ♗b2 ♘c6 8.e3 d4 9.exd4
cxd4 10.♗e1!



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

White should not rely on the fact that he has one or two extra tempos compared to the Modern Benoni. He has less space in the centre. If Black consolidates and carries on ...e6-e5, the ♙b2 may turn into a really ugly piece. Look at the game Obukhov-Kolomensky, Orsk 2000:

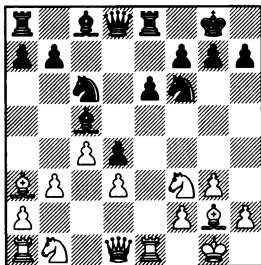
10...♞e8 11.a3?! a5 12.d3 ♙c5 13.♟e5 ♟xe5 14.♞xe5 ♜d6! 15.♞e1 ♙d7 16.♞e2 e5 17.♟d2 ♙f5 18.♟e4 ♟xe4 19.♙xe4 ♙xe4 20.♞xe4 f5 21.♞e2 b6



This is the worst positional scenario into which White could be entrapped. It took him only 20 opening moves to get into a murky cramped position. And he has not committed any apparent mistake!

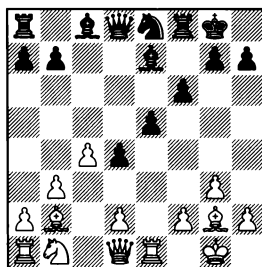
The moral of this example is that White should get rid of his restricted bishop at the first opportunity:

10...♞e8 11.d3 ♙c5 12.♙a3!



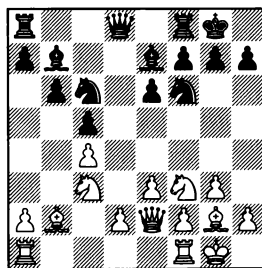
I believe that only this plan leaves White in the battle for the opening advantage. See **game 15 Sherbakov-Grigoriants**, Moscow 1999 for more details.

It is also a good idea to trade a pair of knights. This is especially true when ...e5 looms as after 10...f6. Then best is 11.♟e5! ♟xe5 12.♞xe5 f6 13.♞e1 e5



Again: 14.♙a3!. Then we quickly roll our queenside pawns, starting with c4-c5.

A. 6...c5 7.♙b2 ♟c6 8.e3 b6 9.♟c3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♙b7 11.♞e2



This variation is still inadequately covered in opening books. It is true that Mihail Marin has spent tons of ink on it in his *The English Opening, Volume 2*, but in

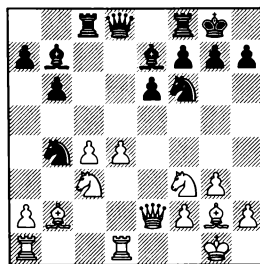
fact his work has hardly advanced theory any further. We'll see in the "Step by Step" chapter that the plan he advocates in the main line does not work.

Marin bases his repertoire on the idea of playing ♟fd1 followed by d2-d4 against any Black's set-up. However, I see at least four variations where this plan does not give any advantage. Thus the question how to play this position as White remains open.

I will investigate the old classic plan of a kingside pawn storm with f2-f4/g2-g4 , having also h2-h4-h5-h6 in mind. It leads to strategically unbalanced positions without forced variations, where the cost of every move is higher for Black because his king is in danger.

Black has tried nearly all legal moves in the diagram position. His only real counterplay is based on the breakthrough $\dots\text{b6-b5}$ (with, or without the preparatory $\dots\text{a6}$). Thus the most consistent answer should be $11.\dots\text{a6}$. Amazingly, this continuation is relatively rare. More often Black chooses developing moves. Two of them – $11.\dots\text{♞b4}$ and $11.\dots\text{♞d7}$, allow a simple and straightforward approach from White. He does play d4 , followed by d4-d5 (if possible!) and takes over the initiative:

a) $11.\dots\text{♞b4}$ $12.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $13.\text{exd4}$ ♞c8 $14.\text{♟fd1}$

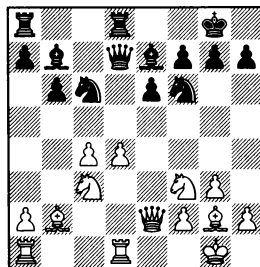


$14.\dots\text{♞e8}$ $15.\text{a3}$ ♞c6 $16.\text{d5!?$ exd5 $17.\text{♞xd5}$ ♞xd5 , A.Petrosian-G. Kuzmin, Baku 1977. Here, $18.\text{♟xd5!}$ ♞c7 $19.\text{♞e1}$ would have bound Black up and down.

b) $11.\dots\text{♞d7}$ $12.\text{♟fd1!}$ ♟fd8!

$12.\dots\text{♟ad8}$ is bad due to $13.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $14.\text{exd4}$ ♞a5 $15.\text{♞e5}$ ♞c8 $16.\text{d5}$

$13.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $14.\text{exd4}$



As a rule, White is slightly better with hanging pawns if his knights are active, as in the diagram position, where d4-d5 is always on the agenda. Shift the knight from c3 to d2 with the manoeuvre ♞c3-b1-d2 (if the c4 -pawn required extra protection), and the game would be balanced if not even more pleasant for Black.

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♙g2 ♙e7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3

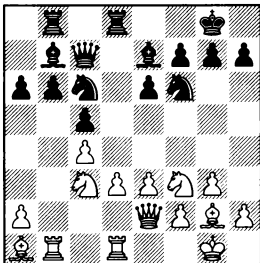
Unfortunately, the early d2-d4 hardly brings White an edge after 11...a6, 11...♙c8 or 11...♚c7. Instead, White has another plan which is well tested, but it is still hiding a lot of fine points. He remains passive in the centre and launches a pawn storm on the kingside with the help of the f- and g- (or g- and h-) pawns. This set-up has a slower version with ♙ab1+♙fd1, and a sharper variant with ♙ad1 (or ♙ab1)+♙f1. The former is universal and it works against most Black's defences. The latter is more risky, but it is tactically justified in the event of passive inaccurate play from the opponent.

Note that engine's evaluations may be misleading!

White's attack usually develops slowly and decisive collisions happen after 15 or more moves of redeployment and manoeuvring. Thus a depth of 22-25 half-moves is typically insufficient for the best engines to assess correctly the full potential of White's assault.

Let us now investigate:

1. 11...a6 12. ♙fd1!? ♚c7
13. ♙ab1! ♙ab8 14. ♙a1 ♙fd8 15. d3



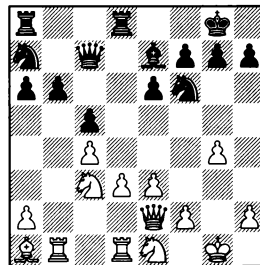
The first stage of our plan is complete. We have firm control of b5, eventually we can reinforce it with a2-a4. Any troubles along the d-file are also ruled out for near-future. In short, White has won time for regrouping and launching the pawn storm on the flank. His next step will be ♘e1, followed up by f2-f4 or g2-g4.

Black's task is to wait for us to loosen the grip and counterattack with ...b6-b5 or even ...f7-f5. If he rushed on the 14th or 15th move to prepare ...b6-b5 with ...♘a7, then d4! would have taken the initiative. So he makes another useful move:

15...♙a8 16. ♘e1 and only now 16...♘a7

The continuation of the waiting strategy with 16...♘e8 17.f4 is considered in **game 19 Zaichik-Tiviakov**, Moscow 1994.

17. ♙xa8 ♙xa8 18. g4!



White's design is to push g4-g5, ♙g4, ♘e4, h2-h4-h5-h6.

Note that White's set-up is possible against practically any move order of Black.

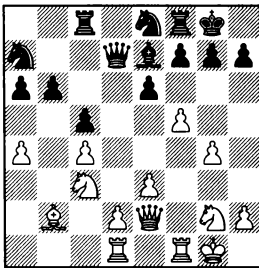
2. 11...♞c8?!

This move is a pure waste of time. It does not prepare ...b6-b5 so White can ignore this threat and opt for a more aggressive set-up than in the previous line:

12.♞ad1!?

Leaving the other rook on f1. It will enhance the effect of f2-f4-f5 and the rook lift ♞f1-f3-h3 is also a valuable attacking resource. White often begins with 12.♘e1, but the text is more accurate. In this set-up, the best stand of Black's queen is d7 from where it is eyeing all four critical squares: b5, f5, d3 and d2. However, 12.♞ad1 ♚d7 would be dubious due to 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♙b4 15.d5 ♘a5 16.♘e5±.

An example of White's further play is the following variation: 12... ♚c7 13.♘e1 a6 14.f4 ♘a7 15.a4 ♙xg2 16.♘xg2 ♚d7 17.g4 ♘e8 18.f5



You should also see **game 17 Kharlov-Kosyrev**, Samara 20.06.2000 for 12...♘a5 13.♘e1.

Finally, 11...♚c7 is a particular

case. Play may transpose to line 1 after 12.♞fd1, or take a sharper course following 12.♘e1. In the latter case, White plays similarly to line 2, but he is a tempo down. His attack is still dangerous, though.

I was often hesitant during my analyses how to recapture on g2 when Black exchanges the bishops himself. Perhaps there is no general recipe, but I suggest to take by knight – ♘xg2, when our rook is on f1. We may send it later to f4-h5. In the set-up with ♞fd1, our attack will often feature g4-g5 instead of f4-f5. Then we'll need our knight on another route – f3-e5-g4(f7)-f6/h6, so we should prefer ♚xg2 (or ♞f1-f2xg2).

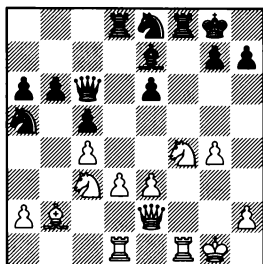
I have avoided more details on purpose, because play is not forced and both sides have too many decent possibilities. It would be impossible to analyse them branch by branch. It is better to remember the main plans and build up a good understanding of the position. I hope the next lines will arm you adequately for practical battles.

Attacking Guide

I'll try now to present the most typical patterns of White's kingside attack. I begin with a few examples where White's rook remains on f1. This enables tactical solutions along the f-file:

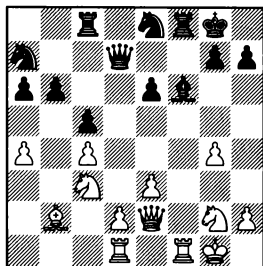
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

Analysis



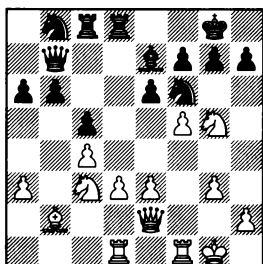
21.♟h5 b5 22.♟e4 bxc4
23.♙xf8+! ♙xf8 24.♙f1+- ♙b7
25.♙f2 ♙e7 26.♟xc5 cxd3 27.♟xe6.

Sherbakov–Loginov St. Petersburg 1998



20.g5!! ♙xg5 21.♙xf8+ ♟xf8
22.♟e4 ♙h6 23.a5 (or 23.♙f1+
♟g8 24.♙g4+- ♙e7 25.♟f6+ ♟xf6
26.♙xf6 g6 27.♙xe6) 23...bxa5
24.♟xc5 1-0.

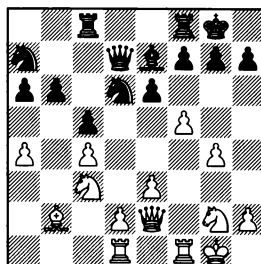
Markus–Perunovic Subotica 2008



The pressure on e6 forces Black to concede the d5-square as 20... ♙d7 is bad in view of 21.♟ce4 or 21.fxe6 fxe6 22.d4.

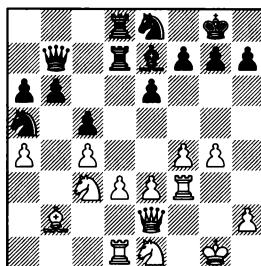
20...exf5 21.♙xf5 ♟bd7 22.♟d5
♙e8 23.♙df1 ♙c6 24.e4 ♙d8 25.♟xf7
♟xf7 26.♙h5+ ♟g8 27.♟xf6+ 1-0.

Analysis



19.f6!! gxf6 (19...♙xf6 20.♙xf6!
gxf6 21.♟f4 ♙f8 22.♟h5 ♟e8
23.♟e4) 20.♟f4 b5 21.axb5 axb5
22.d3 b4 23.♟e4 ♟e4 24.dxe4
♙b7 25.♟h5 e5 26.g5+-.

Kharlov–Kosyrev Samara 2000

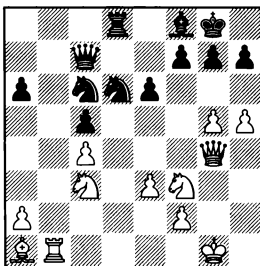


White has simply followed the typical attacking scheme and went on to obtain a promising position despite Black's ingenious resistance: 21.♙h3 b5 22.axb5 axb5 23.cxb5 c4

24.d4 ♖d6 25.g5 g6 26.♟f3 ♜xb5
27.♟e5 ♞c7. Here, best would have
been 28.♟xf7 ♜xf7 29.♞xh7+ ♜g8
30.♞h6 ♟f8 31.♞xg6+ ♟g7 32.♞xe6±.

White's attack is much slower after ♞fd1. We need additional resources and that is usually the h-pawn. The following diagram is a model position with an advantage for White:

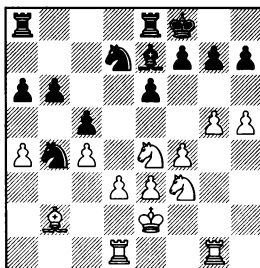
Analysis



1.h6±. On the left wing White is balancing while on the kingside he enjoys a serious spatial advantage. Black's pieces are on the defensive.

Note that this plan is no less effective without queens:

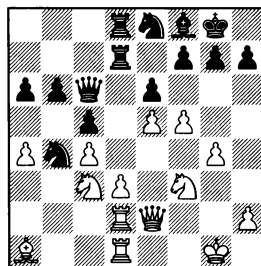
A.Sokolov-Thesing Berlin 1993



29.g6 fxg6 30.♟fg5 ♟xg5 when
31.hxg6!! was winning beautifully.

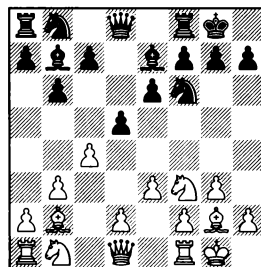
White often resorts to the e-pawn in order to repel the enemy pieces. This commonly happens when Black has sent his c6-knight away from d4, for example to a7 or b4:

Zaichik-Tiviakov Moscow 1994



Ribli suggests here 27.f6 and again, Black is significantly cramped.

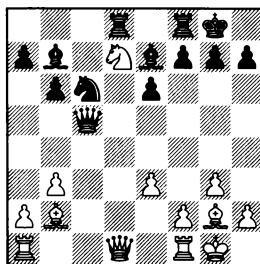
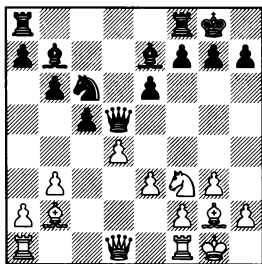
B. 6...b6 7.♟b2 ♟b7 8.e3



Now Black has two major possibilities: to develop the knight on c6 or d7.

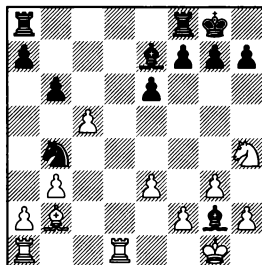
a) 8...c5 9.♟c3 ♜c6 10.cxd5
♜xd5 11.♟xd5 ♞xd5 12.d4

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



Black opts for this variation mainly in order to kill all the action (and trade as many pieces as possible), and dry up the position practically by force. It is a tough nut to crack, indeed. We should be glad to obtain even the slightest edge in the endgame after:

12...♘b4 13.♘h4 ♗d7 14.dxc5 ♗xd1 15.♟fxd1 ♙xg2



16.♙xg2 ♙xc5 17.a3

The good news is that White still has some lead in development while Black is playing for two results only.

There is one long variation that requires memorisation:

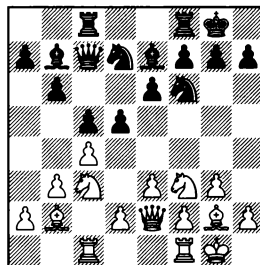
12...♙ad8 13.♘e5 ♗d6 14.dxc5 ♗xc5 15.♘d7

15...♗f5 (15...♗g5 16.h4 ♗h6 17.♙c1±) 16.e4 ♗g5 17.h4 ♗h6 18.♙c1 g5 19.hxg5 ♗g7 20.e5! ♙h8! 21.♙f4 ♙a3 22.b4! ♙xb4

This was Rath-G.Flear, Esbjerg 1982. Marin points out here to 23.♙c1 ♙c5 24.♙c3, intending ♙d3, and White is on top.

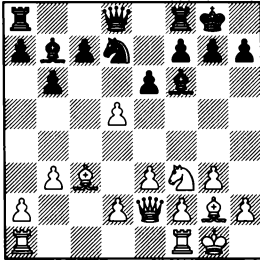
b) 8...♘bd7 9.♘c3 (9.♗e2 a5!? is unclear to me) **9...♘e4**

The waiting strategy 9...c5 10.♗e2 ♙c8 (10...♘e4 11.♙fd1!) 11.♙ac1 ♗c7 leads to the following position:



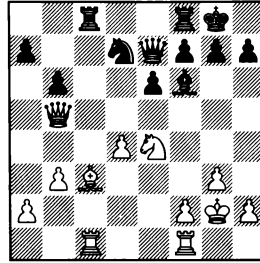
I like Malakhov's idea 12.♘h4!? dxc4, transposing to the structures from set-up A.

10.♗e2! ♙f6 11. cxd5 ♘xc3 12.♙xc3



Black has delayed ...c5 and he may be unable to achieve it at all. That makes the whole complex of light squares on the queenside, and especially c6, rather weak, for instance: 12...♙xc3 13.dxc3 ♙xd5 14.♞ad1 ♚e7 15.♘d4 or:

12...♙xd5 13.d4 ♙e4 14.♞ac1 ♚e7 15.♘d2! ♙xg2 16.♜xg2 c5 17.♘e4 cxd4 18.exd4 ♞ac8 19.♚b5±



White is menacing ♙b4. All his pieces are active, in a sharp contrast to the opponent's army.

Points to remember:

In the reversed Modern Benoni, trade bishops with ♙a3.

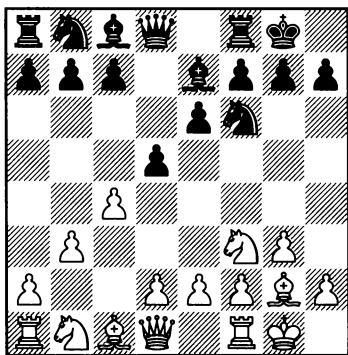
If Black takes on c4, our main plan is ♘e1 and a pawn storm on the kingside. Only 11...♚d7 and 11...♘b4 call for d4.

If Black plays ...♘bd7 and waits, we prepare f2-f4 by ♘h4.

If Black plays ...♘c6 and waits, we open the centre by exchanging on d5 and later on c5, hoping to use our lead in development.

Step by Step

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2
♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



Of course, the Catalan, which arises after 6.d4, is an excellent alternative. Moreover, White has sidestepped quite a few complex branches, for instance, the check from b4.

After 6.b3, I will focus on:

A. 6...c5; B. 6...b6

Minor alternatives are:

a) 6...d4

White can transpose to the variations I consider on move 8 with:

7.e3 c5

7...♘c6 8.exd4 ♘xd4 9.♙b2 ♘xf3+ (Black cannot hold the d4-square anyway – 9...♙c5 10.♘a3 followed by ♘c2.) 10.♙xf3 ♖b8 11.♙e2 b6 12.♘c3 ♙b7 13.♙ad1 ♙xg2 14.♙xg2 offers White some space advantage. Botvinnik-Stahlberg, Amsterdam 1954, went 14...c6 15.♘e4 ♖b7 16.♘g5 ♘d7 17.♘f3 ♙f6 18.d4±.

8.exd4 cxd4 9.♙b2.

Besides, 9.d3 ♘c6 10.♙e1 ♘d7! 11.♘a3 is also playable and leads to typical Modern Benoni positions with reversed colours.

b) 6...a5 7.♘c3 d4

After 7...b6 8.♙b2 ♙b7, White will play d4 at once or after 9.e3 ♘a6. It looks like a side-line Catalan, where Black's plan is not too clear while White will exchange on d5 and will try to put pressure along the c-file.

7...♘bd7 8.♙b2 ♘b6 9.d3 a4 10.♙c2 a3 11.♙c1 d4 12.♘e4 turned well for White in Altykenov-Polivnov, Alushta 2009. Of course, 8.d4 is also a sound choice.

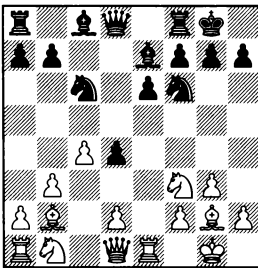
A. 6...c5 7.♟b2 ♘c6

If Black wants to play the reversed Modern Benoni, he commonly prefers to do it on the next move. There is no objective reason for this because after 7...d4, White has not anything better than 8.e3 ♘c6. In practice, he also tries 8.b4, but then 8...a5 should equalise.

8.e3 b6

8...dxc4 9.bxc4 ♘d3 does not make much sense because trading queens does not solve Black's problems with development: 10.♟b3 ♘d8 11.♟d1 a6 12.♟xd3 ♟xd3 13.♘c3 ♘d8 14.♘a4 ♟b8 15.♘e5±.

8...d4 9.exd4 cxd4 10.♟e1! leads to the reversed Modern Benoni:



It is pointless to count the tempos here. ♟b2 may be considered a step in the wrong direction, but the hit on d4 prevents the thematic Benoni redeployment ♘f6-d7-c5. It is more important that Black cannot achieve ...e6-e5, which is the cornerstone of any active plan for him. He should work hard to enable it with:

a) 10...♘e8, aiming for ...f6, ...e5, or b) 10...♟e8 followed up by a bishop's retreat to c5 or f8.

A minor alternative is 10...d3. This move only opens the diagonal to White's worst piece and invites 11.♘c3. Then the only consistent continuation is Tal's choice 11...♘d7 [or 11...♘b4 12.♟c1 ♟e8 (12...♘c2 13.♟f1) 13.♘e5 ♘d7 14.♘xd7 ♟xd7 15.♟h5±] 12.a3 a5 when 13.♘b5 ♘c5 14.♘e5 gave White the more active pieces in Andersson-Langeweg, Amsterdam 1973.

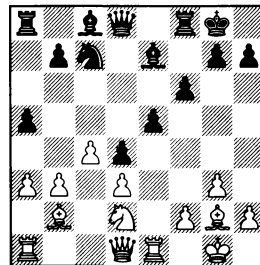
a) 10...♘e8

This is too passive. White should answer:

11.♘e5!

White has less space so he should exchange a couple of minor pieces to ensure more breathing space and activate the g2-bishop. It is also important to free the way to the f-pawn in order to enable f2-f4.

The inclusion of 11.a3 a5 is positionally wrong in my opinion, because it deprives White of the possibility of trading its dark-squared bishop: 12.♘e5 ♘xe5 13.♟xe5 f6 14.♟e1 e5 15.d3 ♘c7 16.♘d2

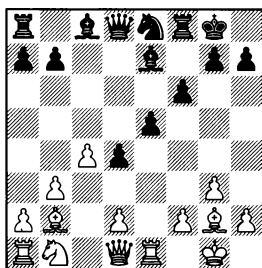


1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

White's bishop on b2 is unemployed. The imminent breakthrough f2-f4 will increase its impact on the centre, but not enough for a serious advantage. Play may continue 16...♘e6 17.♙d5 ♖h8 18.f4 ♘c5 19.♘e4, with mutual chances.

11...♘xe5 12.♙xe5 f6 13.♙e1 e5

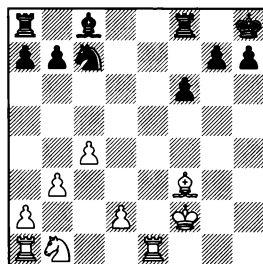
13...♘c7!? is a way to avoid the sharp variation with f2-f4. White should probably transpose to the main line with 14.♙a3. Wahls-Chandler, Germany 2002, saw a similar plan: 14.d3 ♙b8 15.♙a3 ♙xa3 16.♘xa3 e5 17.♙d2 ♙d6 18.♘c2 ♖h8 19.b4 b6 20.f4±.



14.♙a3!

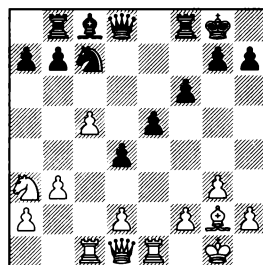
I recommend this exchange in most branches of the reversed Modern Benoni. In my opinion, it is principally wrong to play with bad pieces in one's camp. Tarrasch's formula was: one bad piece equals a bad game. To be fair, White has also a tactical solution of that problem. It cannot be a main repertoire since Black can easily sidestep it with 13...♘c7, but at least it is fun:

14.f4 exf4 15.♙f3 fxg3 16.♙d5+ ♖h8 17.hxg3 ♙xd5 18.♙xd5 ♙d6 19.♙xd4 ♘c7 20.♙f3 ♙xg3 21.♙f2 ♙xf2+ 22.♖xf2.



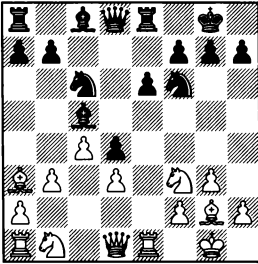
This crazy endgame occurred in Kosten-Luther, Austria 2009. The only thing I can say is that it is totally unclear to me. Only a very deep computer analysis can shed some light on it, but I prefer to play chess and not to spend my time on memorising long variation, where even a considerably weaker opponent might beat me thanks to a better computer assistance. This game went further 22...♙d8 23.♙e7 ♘e6 24.♘c3 ♖g8 25.♘d5 ♖f8 26.♙h5 (26.♙xe6 ♙xe6 27.♘c7 ♙f5 28.♘xa8 ♙xa8 29.♙xb7 ♙d8 30.♙d5) 26...♘g5 27.♙ae1 ♙d7 28.d4 ♙e8? (28...♙ac8!) 29.♙xe8 ♙xe8 30.♙xb7 ♙xe1 31.♖xe1 ♘f3+ 32.♖f2 ♘xd4 33.♖e3 ♘f5+ 34.♖f4 ♘d6 35.♙d7 ♘e8 36.c5 ♙c8 37.b4 a5 38.a3 axb4 39.axb4 h5 40.♖f5 ♙a8 41.♖g6 1-0.

14...♙xa3 15.♘xa3 ♘c7 16.♙c1 ♙b8 17.c5



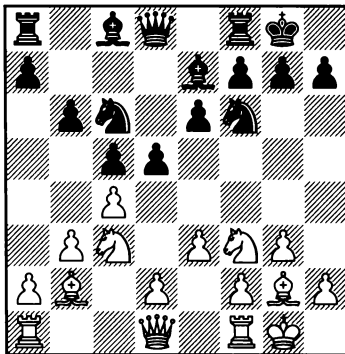
White's pawn majority on the queenside makes his game preferable. The blockading attempt 17... b5 should be met by 18.cxb6 axb6 19.f4 exf4 20.♖f3, with an initiative.

b) 10...♞e8 11.d3 ♠c5 12.♠a3!



I believe that only this plan leaves White in the battle for the opening advantage. Marin's recommendation 12.♗e5 ♗xe5 13.♞xe5 is insufficient due to 13...♞d6!. See **game 15 Sherbakov-Grigoriants**, Moscow 1999 for more details.

9.♗c3



Now Black has to define the future character of the game.

A1. 9...♠b7; A2. 9...dxc4; A3. 9...♠a6.

A1. 9...♠b7 10.cxd5 ♗xd5

10....exd5 11.d4 offers White a very easy game. One recent example is Vitiugov-Frolyanov, Russian rapid ch. 2011: 11...♞e8 (11...♠a6 12.♗e5) 12.♞c1 ♠f8 13.♗e2 (the prophylactic move 13.♞e1 is more popular) 13...♗e4 14.♗f4 ♠a6 15.♞e1 c4 16.bxc4 ♠xc4 17.a3 ♞c8 18.♗e5 ♗xe5 19.dxe5 b5 20.♞g4±.

11.♗xd5 ♞xd5

An interesting alternative is:

12...exd5 13.d4 a5!?

Or 12...♠a6 13.♞e1 c4 14.bxc4 ♠xc4 15.♗d2 b5 16.♗xc4 bxc4 17.♞a4 ♗b4 18.♠c3 ♗d3 19.♞eb1±.

13.dxc5

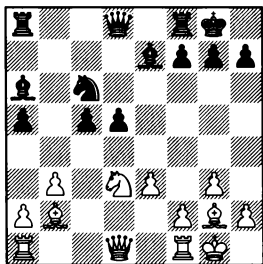
13.♞d2!? is more restrained, but White's plan, based on the weakness of the d5-pawn, is very clear and easy to implement: 13...a4 14.♞fd1 axb3 15.axb3 ♞xa1 16.♠xa1 ♞a8 17.♠c3 ♞d8 18.♞b2 ♠f8 19.♗e1 cxd4 20.♠xd4 ♗xd4 21.♞xd4 ♞a5 22.♗d3 ♞b5 23.♞b2 ♠d6 24.♗f4 ♠xf4 25.gxf4±, Hickl-A.Sokolov, Switzerland 2007.

13...bxc5 14.♗e1!

14.♗h4 ♠xh4 15.gxh4 ♞xh4 16.♞xd5 ♗d8 17.♞e5 f6 18.♞g3 was only equal in Reinderman-Irwanto, Jakarta 2011: 18...♞xg3 19.hxg3 ♠xg2 20.♠xg2 ♗e6 21.♠a3 ♞fb8=.

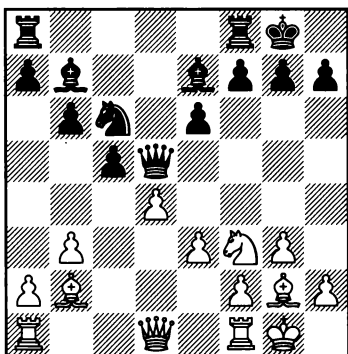
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♚e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

14...♙a6 15.♘d3



White retains some initiative, but he must be ready to sacrifice the exchange after 15...♝c8 16.♞e1 c4 17.♘f4 ♙b4 18.♘xd5 ♙xe1 19.♞xe1 cxb3 20.axb3 ♞e8 21.♞d1, with a great compensation.

12.d4



Black has tried many continuations here, but I'll stop my attention to: A11. 12...♞ad8; A12. 12...♘a5; A13. 12...♘b4.

Minor alternatives are:

a) 12...♞fd8 13.♘e5 ♞d6 14.♞f3 (or 14.♞h5±) ♘xe5 15.♞xb7 ♘d3 16.♙a3 ♝ab8 17.♞xa7±, Pigusov-Dzuban, Riga 1988.

b) 12...♞d8 13.♘e5 (I would not have mentioned this move since 13.dxc5 ♙xc5 14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.♙xb7 ♝b8 16.♙e4± is obviously in White's favour, had not Kramnik chosen it versus Radjabov in Kazan 2011.) 13...♘xe5 14.♙xb7 ♝b8 15.♙g2 cxd4 16.exd4 ♘d7 17.d5 exd5 18.♞xd5 ♙f6 19.♝ad1 ♙xb2 20.♞xd7±. If you had Kramnik's technique, you would have fair chances to win this endgame.

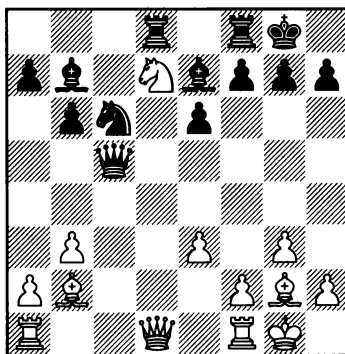
A11. 12...♞ad8

This is an invitation to the long forced variation:

13.♘e5 ♞d6

13...♞xg2+ promises Black only a difficult struggle for the draw.

14.dxc5 ♞xc5 15.♘d7



15...♞f5 (15...♞g5 16.h4 ♞h6 17.♝c1±) 16.e4 ♞g5 17.h4 ♞h6 18.♙c1 g5 19.hxg5 ♞g7 20.e5 ♘h8! 21.♙f4 ♙a3 22.b4! ♙xb4

This was Rath-G.Flear, Esbjerg 1982. Marin points out here to 23.♖c1 ♖c5 24.♖c3, intending ♖d3, and White is on top.

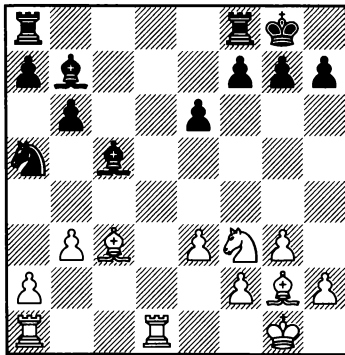
A12. 12...♖a5 13.dxc5

The most principled answer, but White has other good alternatives as well: 13.♖h4!? or 13.♖c1!? ♖ac8 14.♖a3! ♟f5 (14...♖fd8?! 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.♖xc5 ♖xc5 17.♟xd5 ♖cxd5 18.♖d4 ♖5d7 19.b4±) 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.♖xc5 ♖xc5 17.♖d4 ♟e5 18.♖xb7 ♖xb7 19.b4 ♖xc1 20.♟xc1 ♖d6 21.♖d1±.

13...♟xd1

13...♖xc5 14.♟e2 also favours White: 14...♖fd8 15.♖fd1 ♟h5 (15...♟f5 16.♖c3 ♖c6 17.b4 ♖xb4 18.♖xb4 ♖xb4 19.♖h4) 16.h3 f6! 17.♖c3 ♖c6 18.♟c4 ♟f7 19.b4 ♖f8 20.b5± (Marin).

14.♖fxd1 ♖xc5 15.♖c3!?



15...♖fc8 16.♖e5 ♖xg2 17.♖xg2 f6 (17...♖c6!?) 18.♖xa5 bxa5 19.♖c4± (Marin).

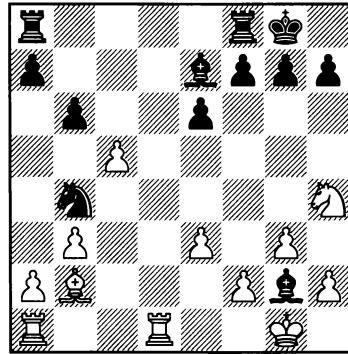
A13. 12...♖b4

A tough nut to crack! Black has considerable chances to make a draw in this line. Compared to the previous line, the knight attacks the a2-pawn and that restricts White's choice. Most often White answers with:

13.♖h4

13.♖e1 has similar ideas: 13...♟d7 14.dxc5 ♟xd1 15.♖xd1 ♖xg2 16.♖xg2, with a tiny edge for White: 16...♖xa2 17.cxb6 axb6 18.♖d7 ♖f6 19.♖xf6 gxf6 20.♖f3 or 16...♖d5 17.e4 ♖f6 18.♖f3.

13...♟d7 14.dxc5 ♟xd1 15.♖fxd1 ♖xg2



16.♖xg2

I tried to make 16.♖xg2 work, but then 16...♖xc5 17.a3 ♖c2! 18.♖ac1 ♖xa3 19.♖xc5 bxc5 20.♖xa3 ♖fb8 is unclear. In such endgames a rook plus a distant passer is in no way weaker than a ♖+♖.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

16...♙xc5

16...bxc5!? is an interesting attempt to restrain White on the queenside. The hit on a2 is very annoying. In Ree-Brandenburg, Netherlands 2011, White tried the most logical move 17.♞d7, but the possibility of 17...♙xh4 18.gxh4 ♜fd8= rescues Black. White should play positionally: 17.♟f3 ♜fd8 (17...a5 18.a4±) 18.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 19.♙c3 ♟c6 (19...a5 20.a3 ♟c6 21.a4±) 20.♟f1 f6 21.♟e2 ♟f7 22.♟d2, with a slightly better pawn structure.

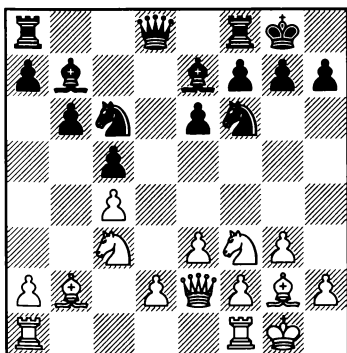
17.a3 ♟c6

I suspect that the position after 17...♟c2 18.♞ac1 ♟xa3 19.♞xc5 bxc5 20.♙xa3 might be a technical draw.

18.b4

White has some edge since 18...♙e7 could be attacked by 18.♟f5.

A2. 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 ♙b7 11.♞e2



A21. 11...♞c8; A22. 11...a6; A23. 11...♞c7; A24. 11...♞d7; A25. 11...♟b4

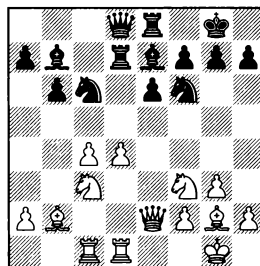
A21. 11...♞c8

This move is Black's most popular answer in practice. It aims to discourage White's active play in the centre. However, it is a pure waste of time against a flank attack with f4.



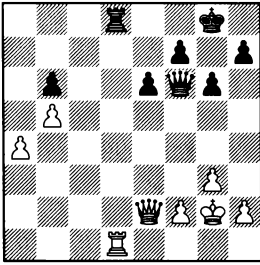
12.♞ad1!?

a) 12.♞ac1 ♞c7 13.d4 is possible, but insufficient for an edge due to 13...cxd4 14.exd4 ♞d7 15.♜fd1 ♙e8!



This is meant to take the sting out of d4-d5. White has to play this position fast because once Black has consolidated, the hanging pawns may really begin to hang. So Marin's recipe 16.♟b5 a6 17.♟e5 seems adequate, but he stops his analysis too early, evaluating White's chances as higher. Unfortunately, forced play after 17...♟xe5 18.dxe5 ♙xg2 19.exf6 ♙xf6 20.♙xf6 (20.♞xd7 ♞xd7 21.♟xg2 axb5 22.♙xf6 gxf6 23.cxb5 ♞d5+ 24.♟g1 ♙a8 25.♞c4

h5 26.a4 ♖d8=) 20...♙xd1+ 21.♙xd1 ♜xf6 22.♙xg2 axb5 23.cxb5 ♖d8 24.a4 g6 leads us to a draw:



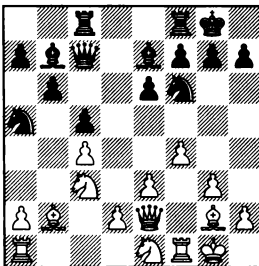
25.♙xd8+ ♜xd8 26.♜e4 ♜b8 27.♜c6 ♙f8. Black's king arrives just in time to stop the passer: 28.a5 bxa5 29.b6 ♙e7 30.b7 ♙d8.

My further efforts failed to make the plan with d4 work so I had to turn my attention to the right wing.

The universal set-up from line A23 is playable: 12.♙fd1 ♜c7 13.♙ab1 ♙fd8 14.d3 ♜b8 15.♙e1 ♙a5 16.f4 ♙xg2 17.♜xg2 ♙c6 18.g4 ♙e8 19.♙e4 ♙d6 20.♙g3 ♜b7 21.♙h5 f6 (21...♙f8 22.♙f3) 22.g5.

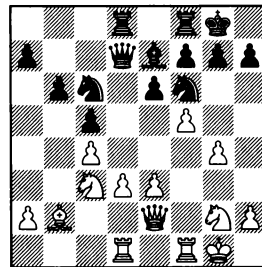
White achieves excellent practical results with:

b) 12.♙e1!?. Then 12...♜c7?! 13.f4 ♙a5 leads to this position:



The game Malakhov-Bokros, Mainz 2009, went 14.f5?! ♙xg2 15.♙xg2 ♜d7! 16.fxe6 (16.g4 ♙fd8 17.♙ad1 ♜d3+) 16...fxe6 17.♙f4 ♙cd8 18.♙ad1 ♙d6 19.d3 ♙c6 20.♜g2 (20.d4!∞) 20...♙e5+. This example teaches us what we should NOT do – to push f5 too early when we could not support it with g4 due to weaknesses along the d-file. Instead, White can exploit the particular move order of the opponent by 14.♙b5 ♜d7 15.♙xa7 ♙cd8 16.♙xb7 ♙xb7 17.♙f3 ♙e4 18.d4, winning a pawn, but at the cost of the initiative. It is more in the spirit of the position to prepare f5 with 14.♙ad1!? or:

14.g4 ♙xg2 15.♙xg2 ♙cd8 16.♙ad1 (16.g5? ♙e8 17.♙f3 ♜d7 18.♙h3 ♜d3 19.♜h5 ♜g6 20.♜e2 f6+) 16...♜d7 17.d3 ♙c6. (Otherwise Black is risking to get crushed with his knight at the edge of the board.) 18.f5.



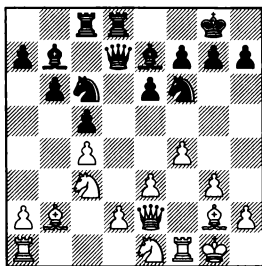
We have reached a typical position with an initiative for White. Possible continuations are:

18...♙e8 19.♙e4± or 18...exf5 19.gxf5 ♙e5 (19...♙fe8 20.♙e1 ♙d6 21.♜g2 ♙e5 22.♙f3 ♜d6 23.e4± ♙d7 24.♙xe5 ♙dxe5 25.♙d5) 20.e4. The

1.♞f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♞f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

pawn majority in the centre gives White a free hand on the kingside.

In this set-up, the black queen has no business on c7. After 12.♞e1, best is probably 12...♞d7 13.f4 ♜fd8.



Here 14.d3 and 14.♞ad1 are probably of equal worth. White's chances are preferable. His plan is to push g4, f5. Be sure to look at the detailed commentaries of **game 16 Markus-Perunovic**, Subotica 2008.

My main line 12.♞ad1!? presents a clever move order which discourages 12...♞d7 due to 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♙b4 15.d5 ♞a5 16.♞e5±. At the same time, it leaves the other rook on the kingside. That could be crucial for the success of the imminent march forward of the f-pawn after ♞e1 as I have shown in line b.

12...♞a5

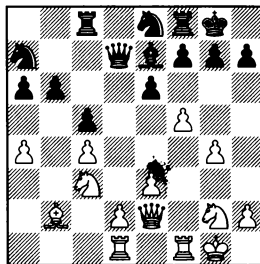
Another option is 12...♞c7 13.♞e1 and then:

a) 13...a6 14.f4 ♞a7 15.a4

15.f5!? seizes the initiative, but I'm following the game Sherbakov-

Loginov, St. Petersburg 1998, which followed the plan with a slower, but better prepared attack:

15...♙xg2 16.♞xg2 ♞d7 17.g4 ♞e8 18.f5



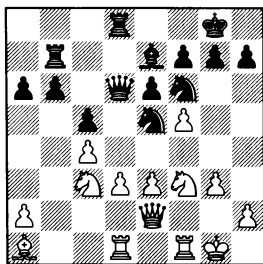
18...♙f6

18...♞d6 allows the bold sacrifice 19.f6!! [White has another good continuation: 19.♞f4 b5 (19...♞c6 20.♞h5 g6 21.♞g3†) 20.axb5 axb5 21.cxb5 ♞axb5 22.♞xb5 ♞xb5 23.f6.] 19...gxf6 (19...♙xf6 20.♙xf6! gxf6 21.♞f4 ♜fd8 22.♞h5 ♞e8 23.♞e4) 20.♞f4 b5 21.axb5 axb5 22.d3 b4 23.♞e4 ♞xe4 24.dxe4 ♞b7 25.♞h5 e5 26.g5+–.

19.fxe6 fxe6 20.g5!! ♙xg5 21.♙xf8+ ♙xf8 22.♞e4 ♙h6 23.a5 (or 23.♙f1+ ♙g8 24.♙g4+– ♞e7 25.♞f6+ ♞xf6 26.♙xf6 g6 27.♙xe6) 23...bxa5 24.♞xc5 and Black resigned.

b) 13...♜fd8 14.f4 a6 15.f5 (15.g4!?) 15...♞d6 16.d3 ♜b8 17.♙a1 ♞e5 18.♙xb7 ♜xb7 19.♞f3

Black remained coordinated in the centre, but he has not created any counterplay. The game might continue:

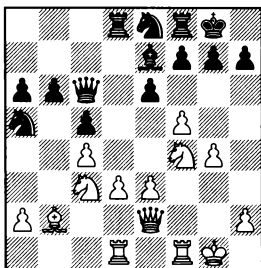


19...exf5 (or 19...♖xf3+20.♜xf3 ♜bd7 21.fxe6 ♜xe6 22.e4±) 20.e4!! fxe4 (20...♜xf3+ 21.♜xf3 ♜d7 22.e5 ♜g4 23.♜d5 ♜h6 24.♙c3 b5 25.♙d2↑) 21.dxe4 ♜e6 22.♜xe5 ♜xe5 23.♜d5 ♜e6 24.♙xf6, with an overwhelming advantage.

c) 13...♜a5 14.f4 ♙xg2 15.♜xg2 ♜cd8 16.g4

We know already that f4-f5 should be well prepared. For instance, 16.f5 ♜d7 17.♜f4 exf5 18.♜cd5 ♜xd5 19.♜xd5 ♜c6 20.♜f2 ♜b4! 21.♜xf5 is only equal.

16...♜b7 17.d3 a6 18.f5 (18.g5 ♜e8 19.♜f3 g6 20.♜h3 ♜d7∞) 18... ♜e8 19.♜f4 ♜c6



This position occurred in Supatashvili-Mkrtchian, Batumi 2003. White has achieved everything

he was aiming to. He should have switched now to concrete calculations:

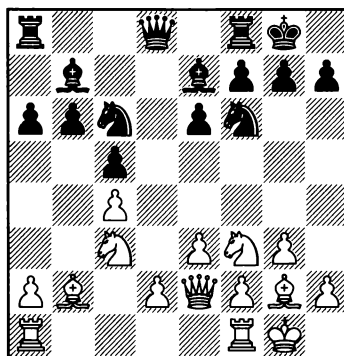
20.fxe6! fxe6 21.♜h5→ when 21...b5 22.♜e4 bxc4 loses to 23.♜xf8+! ♙xf8 24.♜f1+- ♜b7 25.♜f2 ♜e7 26.♜xc5 cxd3 27.♜xe6.

13.♜e1

13.d3!? is a consistent alternative. I analyse it in **game 18 A. Sokolov-Thesing**, Berlin 1993.

The text frees the lane to the f-pawn. See for more details **game 17 Kharlov-Kosyrev**, Samara 20.06.2000

A22. 11...a6



12.♜fd1!

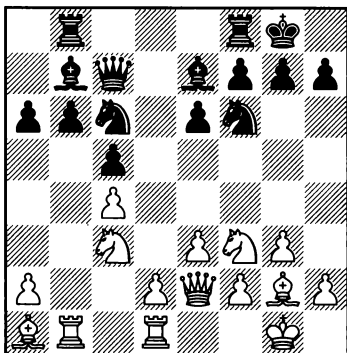
The threat of ...b5 practically rules out the plan with ♜ad1. This does not mean we renounce the idea of a kingside pawn storm. We are simply delaying it until the b5-square is under firm control.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♚e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

Marin advocates 12.d4 cxd4 13.exd4 ♖c8 14.♘d1 hoping for 14... ♘a5?! 15.♘e3 ♜c7 16.♙ac1 ♜fd8 17.d5. This manoeuvre has two drawbacks, though. Firstly, I do not like much White's position after 14... b5!?. More importantly, Black can deny altogether the knight's transfer to e3 by not exchanging on d4:

12...♘a5!? when White has not anything better than 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.e4 ♘d7∞ 15.e5 ♘b6. In the game Brunello-Antonsen, Odense 2011, White went on to lose a pawn after 16.♙ad1 ♜c7 17.♘e4? ♙xe4 18.♜xe4 ♘axc4∞.

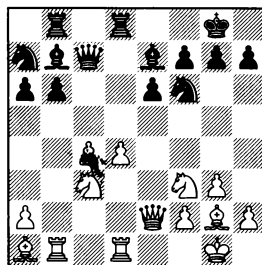
12...♜c7 13.♙ab1! ♙ab8 14.♙a1



The slogan of our opening campaign is prophylaxis! We keep the opponent at bay and we are still hoping for d2-d4 at an opportunity. For example, the thematic 14... ♘a7 would stumble into 15.d4! b5 (15...cxd4 16.exd4 b5 17.d5 ♜xc4 18.♜xc4 bxc4 19.d6± was gloom for Black in Todorovic-Cvetkovic, Belgrade 2007) 16.d5!. In practice, Black usually opts for the flexible:

14...♜fd8 15.d3 ♙a8

15...♘a7 is still inaccurate due to the same 16.d4 cxd4 17.exd4



The next moves will unleash the power of the hanging pawns or, to be precise, of the active long-range pieces behind them. Practice has seen further:

a) 17...b5 18.d5! ♜xc4 (18... exd5 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.cxd5 ♜xd5 21.♙e1± gave White many threats in Kortschnoj-Kir.Georgiev, Lugano 1986.) 19.♜xc4 bxc4 20.dxe6 ♘b5 (20...fxe6 21.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 22.♘g5 ♘b5 23.a4 ♙xg2 24.♙xg2 ♘d7 25.♘xe6 ♘xc3 26.♙xb8 ♘xb8 27.♙xc3±) 21.exf7+ ♙f8 22.♙xd8+ ♙xd8 23.♘e5±, Espig-Gruenberg, Leipzig 1980.

b) 17...♙bc8 18.♜b2!! (setting up an ambush!) 18...b5 (18...♘d7 19.c5 b5 20.a4) 19.d5 ♜xc4 20.dxe6 ♜xe6 21.♘g5 ♜b6 22.♘d5!±.

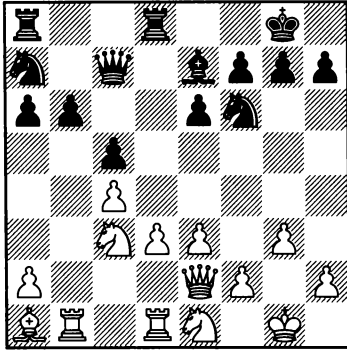
16.♘e1

This retreat is commonly connected with f2-f4, but it is also indispensable for my idea of advancing the g-pawn.

16...♖a7

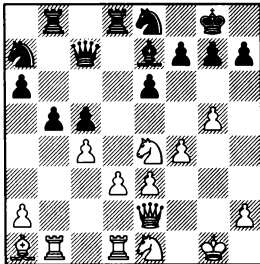
16...♖e8 17.f4 was in **game 19 Zaichik-Tiviakov**, Moscow 1994.

17.♙xa8 ♖xa8



Common continuation here is 18.f4 ♖ab8 19.a4, with double-edged play, for example, 19...♖c6 (19...♖c6 20.♖f3) 20.g4 ♖b4 (20...♖e8 21.♖f3 ♖d6 22.♖d2 ♖f8 23.g5 ♖f5 24.♖e4 ♖b7 25.♖g3) 21.g5 ♖e8 22.♖f3 (22.♖e4 ♖d6!) 22...♖d6 23.♖e5 f6 24.gxf6 ♖xf6.

These variations show that one tempo could be decisive for the success of White's attack so I decided to save a4 and began analysing 19.g4 b5 20.g5 ♖e8 21.♖e4



Our plan is to open the main diagonal with h2-h4-h5-h6 and build the battery ♙a1-♖b2. However, Black can discharge part of the tension with 21...♖d6 22.♙e5 ♖c6 when 23.♖xc5 does not win a pawn due to 23...♖a7 24.♙xd6 ♙xd6 25.♖e4 ♙xf4=. This fine point made me think that f2-f4 may be not obligatory at all. Let us check:

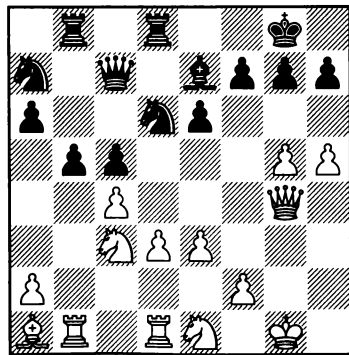
18.g4!

This natural move is a novelty. Indeed, why should White weaken his kingside with f4 when his main plan is to push the h-pawn?! Black cannot prevent g5 by 18...♖e8 19.♖e4 ♖d6, because 20.♖xd6 ♙xd6 21.♖b2 is a little unexpected double hit.

18...♖ab8 19.g5 ♖e8 20.♖g4 ♖d6

20...b5 does not distract White from the right wing: 21.♖e4 bxc4 22.dxc4 ♖xb1 23.♖xb1 ♖c6 24.h4↑.

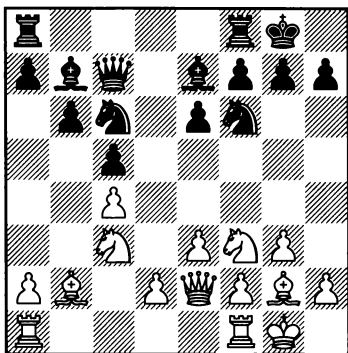
21.h4 b5 22.h5



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

White has an obvious initiative. The game may continue with 22... ♘c6 23.♟f3 bxc4 24.♞xb8 ♞xb8 25.♞b1 ♞c7 26.dxc4 ♙f8 27.h6.

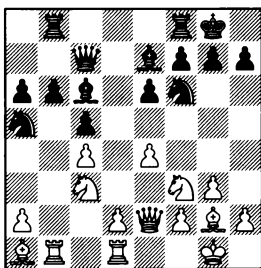
A23. 11...♞c7



A flexible move. It effectively takes the sting out of the plan with d2-d4 because 12.♞ac1 a6 13.d4 could be answered with 13...♟a5.

a) 12.♟b5 looks like a loss of tempo since after 12...♞c8 13.♞fd1 a6 14.♟c3 ♟a5 the queen is not worse on c8 than on c7:

15.♞ab1 ♞b8 16.♙a1 ♙c6 17.e4 ♞c7



18.♟e5 is not dangerous due to

18...♟d7 19.♟xc6 ♟xc6 20.f4 ♟d4 21.♞f1 ♟c2 22.e5 b5.

The game Wang Yue-Hou Yifan Danzhou 2011, saw:

18.♞e1 ♟d7 19.e5, when 19... ♞fd8 would have kept the tension in view of the threat of ...b6-b5.

b) 12.♟e1!? is a risky, but enterprising plan. Compared to the position after 11...♞c8, Black is practically a tempo up. He can develop the rook on d8 or keep it on the queenside to support the breakthrough ...b6-b5. Look at **game 20 Pigusov-Zontakh, Sochi 2007**.

Apart from 12.♟e1!?, White has also the same plan as in line B2:

12.♞fd1 a6

Play has transposed to line B2.

A24. 11...♞d7

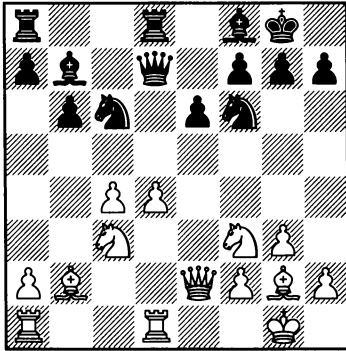
This would be the ideal place for the queen – it controls e6 and f5 thus discouraging White's plan with f2-f4-f5. Moreover, it puts pressure on the d-file and supports the breakthrough ...b6-b5. However, all this is in conditional mood since tactics works in White's favour. Black stumbles into difficulties after:

12.♞fd1! ♞fd8!

12...♞ad8 is plain bad. Vega Holm-Magem Badals, Cala Galdana 1999, went on with 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♟a5 15.♟e5 ♞c8 16.d5 ♞fe8

(16...exd5 17.♟xd5 ♞xd5 18.cxd5) 17.♞h3 ♟c5, when 18.♞b5! a6 (18... ♞b8 19.♞xf7) 19.♞d4! (Marin) would have given him an edge. After the text, things are far from clear:

13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♟f8!

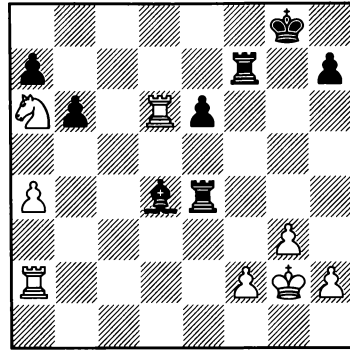


A resilient defence, which Marin does not consider. 14...♞a5 15.d5! is fine for White, beyond doubt.

In the diagram position, 15.d5 has no venom due to 15...exd5 16.♞xd5 ♞xd5 17.cxd5 ♞e7! so I took my time to analyse 15.♞e5 ♞e8 16.♞b5 ♞dc8 17.♟a3 ♟xa3 18.♞xa3 ♞a5 and 15.♞ac1 ♞e7 (15... ♞a5 16.d5) 16.♞b5 a6 17.♟a3 ♞b4 18.♞c3 ♞ac8 19.♞b1 a5 20.♞b5. Although White has some space advantage, play remains complex. Perhaps White should take a small edge in the endgame following:

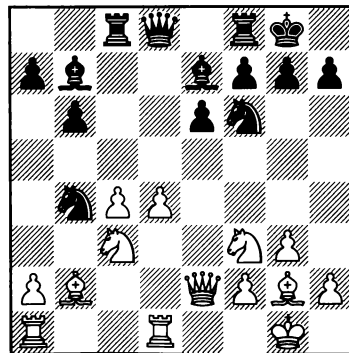
15.a4 ♞a5 16.♞e5 ♞e8 17.♟xb7 ♞xb7 18.♞b5 ♞dc8 19.♞f3 ♞a5 20.d5 ♞xc4 21.♞xc4 ♞xc4 22.♟xf6 gxf6 23.dxe6 (23.♞xf6 a6!) 23... fxe6 24.♞xf6 ♞g6 25.♞f3 ♞e4 26.♞xe4 ♞xe4 27.♞c7 ♞c8 28.♞d7

♟c5 29.♞a6 ♟d4 30.♞a2 ♞f8 31.♟g2 ♞f7 32.♞d6.



The e6-pawn is vulnerable. White is ready to bring a second hit upon it with ♞c6, ♞c7. The d4-bishop is also hanging so it should leave its active stand in the centre. Here is an illustration of how jumpy the white knight could be: 32...♟f6 33.♞c6 ♞e7 34.♞c7 ♟f7 35.a5 bxa5 36.♞xa5 ♞e2 37.♞b5 ♟g6 38.♞a4 ♞b7 39.♞d6 ♞bb2 40.♞e4 ♞b6 41.♞c8±.

A25. 11...♞b4 12.d4 cxd4 13.exd4 ♞c8 14.♞fd1



1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

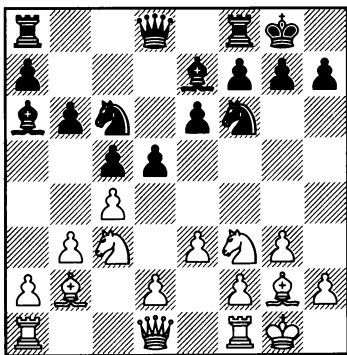
14...♞e8

Black has to do something about the threat of d4-d5. Kharitonov-Dvoirys, Hoogeveen 2000, saw instead 14...♞c7 15.a3 ♘a6 16.d5 exd5, when the forced variation 17.♘b5 ♞xc4 18.♞xe7 ♞xb5 19.♙xf6 ♞c7 20.♞d6 gxf6 21.♘d4 ♞d7 22.♞xf6 ♞e7 23.♞f4 gives White a nice attacking position.

15.a3 ♘c6 16.d5!? exd5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5

I have been following the game A.Petrosian-G.Kuzmin, Baku 1977. Here, 18.♞xd5! ♞c7 19.♞e1 would have bound Black up and down. The only sensible answer 19...♘a5 20.♞e5 ♘xc4 21.♞xe7 ♞xe7 22.♞xe7 ♞xe7 23.♞xe7 ♙xf3 24.♙xf3 ♘xb2 25.♞xa7 g6 26.♙d5 ♞f8 27.♞b7 ♘a4 28.♙c4! leads to an endgame where Black has no useful moves: 28...♙g7 29.h4 h6 30.♙g2 ♙g8 31.♙f3 ♙g7 32.♙e3±, going to the queenside.

A3. 9...♙a6



This development of the bishop is very tricky. Black wants to deny us active play in the centre. One mundane move as 10.d3?! (Marin's recommendation), and White should forget about any opening advantage. Black will get time for bringing the rooks in the centre and his pawns would be even more active than ours.

Kramnik's approach against Giri, Monaco 2011, makes more sense:

10.♞e2 ♞d7 11.♞fd1?! ♞ac8 12.d4 cxd4 13.exd4 ♞fd8 14.♙e5 ♞e8 15.♞f3 ♙b7 16.♞f4=.

Chiburidanidze-Kalevic, Belgrade 1992, introduced the missing element: 10.♞e2 ♞d7 11.♞fd1?! ♞ac8 12.♘b5! ♞fd8 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♞e8 15.♞ac1 ♙b7 16.♙e5 a6 17.♘xc6 ♞xc6 18.♘c3. However, this is still about equal.

Our only chance is an energetic assault in the centre with d4, ♙e5, ♘b5. In this scenario, ♞fd1 is unnecessary and only gives Black's queen time to retreat comfortably to e8. So we should play concrete chess:

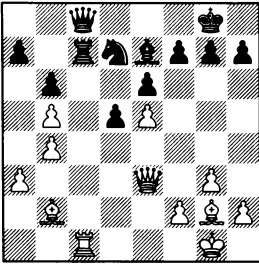
10.♞e2 ♞d7 11.d4!

This is my two cents in the theory of this variation. I was amazed to find that this move was a novelty. Now Black faces some problems:

11...cxd4 12.exd4 ♞fd8

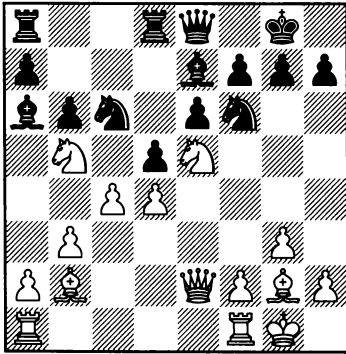
12...♞ac8 13.♙e5 is awkward as the queen has not a safe haven:

13...♙c7 14.♘b5! ♕xb5 15.cxb5
 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♘d7 17.♙ac1 ♜b7
 18.a3! ♙xc1 19.♙xc1 ♙c8 20.♞e3 ♙c7
 21.b4± ♞c8



22.♙e1! ♙c2 23.♙d4. White can easily control the invasion squares along the c-file with his bishop pair. Black will have to passively wait for White's attack with f4-f5.

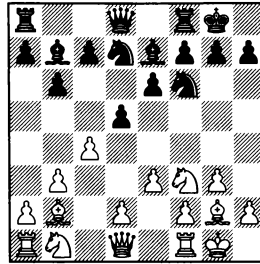
13.♘e5 ♞e8 14.♘b5!



The point of my idea. Now 14... ♕xb5 (Or 14...♙ac8 15.♘xc6 ♙xc6 16.♘xa7 ♙xc4 17.bxc4 ♕xc4 18.♞d2 ♞a4 19.♙fc1 ♞xa7 20.a4±, 15.♙ac1! may be even better.) 15.cxb5 ♖xe5 16.dxe5 ♘d7 17.a3±, followed by b4, gives White full control of the board. Later he will continue with f4-f5.

B. 6...b6 7.♙b2 ♙b7 8.e3 ♘bd7

8...c5 9.♘c3 transposes to line A.



9.♘c3!

9.♞e2 is more popular because it makes 9...♘e4 pointless. Indeed, after 9...c5 10.cxd5 ♖xd5 11.♙fd1! ♙f6 12.d4 cxd4 13.♘xd4, White would have a small edge.

However, I have no idea how to meet 9...a5!. The game Tikkanen-Grandelius, Vasteras 2011, went 10.d3 a4 11.♘bd2 c5 12.♙ae1 axb3 13.axb3 ♙a2= 14.♘b1? dxc4 15.bxc4 ♕xf3+. 9.♘c3 is more natural, but 9...a4! 11.♘xa4 dxc4 12.♙fc1 b5! 13.♘c3 ♙b8 14.bxc4 bxc4 gives Black active play, for example: 15.♙cb1 ♕xf3 16.♞xf3 ♘e5 17.♞d1 ♘d3 18.♞c2 ♘b4 19.♞d1 ♘d3=.

After 9.♘c3, my main line branches to:

B1. 9...♘e4; B2. 9...c5.

9...a5 is not too clear here, because 10.d3 puts the question to Black's last move.

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

B1. 9...♘e4 10.♚e2!

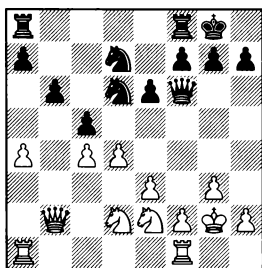
Marin's repertoire is based on:

10.♘e2, but I can not see even a trace of an edge. Let us check further:

10...♙f6 11.♚c2

11...dxc4 12.bxc4 c5 (12...♘d6) 13.♘f4 ♘d6 14.♚b3 cxd4 15.exd4 ♖c8 16.♖fc1 ♚c7 was better for Black in Dominguez-Lysyj, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

11...♙xb2 12.♚xb2 ♚f6 13.d4 dxc4 14.bxc4 ♘d6 15.♘d2 ♙xg2 16.♙xg2 c5 17.a4

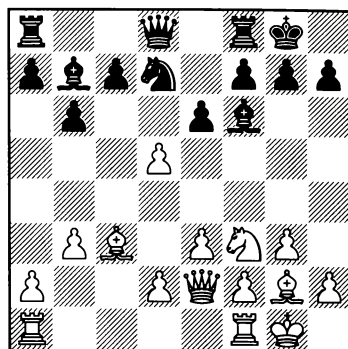


Marin ends his analysis here with the assessment “±”, but this is obviously an example of wishful thinking. 17...cxd4 18.exd4 e5 19.a5 ♘xc4 20.♘xc4 ♚c6+ 21.♙g1 ♚xc4 is a dead draw.

10...♙f6 11.cxd5 ♘c3

No one wished to try 11...exd5 as 12.d4± leads to a typical pawn structure where White maintains lasting pressure along the c-file.

12.♙xc3



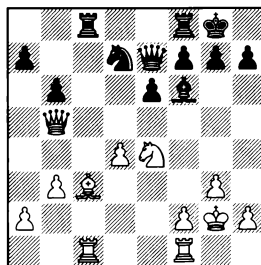
12...♙xd5

The symmetry after 12...♙xc3 13.dxc3 ♙xd5 14.♖ad1 ♚e7 15.♘d4 is a bit more pleasant for White since the active knight on d4 has access to c6. This should ensure control over the d-file. On the other hand, 13...exd5 14.♖ad1 ♚e7 15.♘d4 ♘f6 16.c4 c5 17.♘f5 ♚e5 18.g4 gives White an initiative on the kingside.

13.d4 ♙e4 14.♖ac1 ♚e7

White was slightly better in Dizdar-Markus, Sibenik 2007, due to the weak light squares on the queenside. This could be underlined with:

15.♘d2! ♙xg2 16.♙xg2 c5 17.♘e4 cxd4 18.exd4 ♖ac8 19.♚b5±



White is menacing ♖b4. All his pieces are active.

B2. 9...c5 9.♟c3 ♞bd7

9...♟c6 10.cxd5 is considered in line A1.

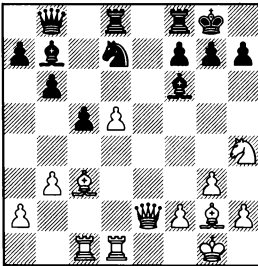
10.♞e2 ♞c8

Alternatives are:

a) 10...♞c7 11.♞ac1 ♞c8 (11...♞ad8 12.♞fd1) transposes to the main line. Perhaps White does not even need ♞ac1 and should try 11.♟h4 immediately.

b) 10...♟e4 11.♞fd1!

11.cxd5 ♟xc3 12.♟xc3 ♟xd5 13.e4 ♟b7 14.♞fd1 ♞c7 15.♞ac1 ♞ad8 16.d4 ♞b8 17.d5 exd5 18.exd5 ♟f6 19.♟h4 is an important line.

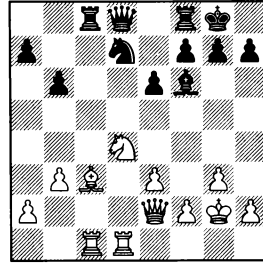


Black used to struggle in such positions because White's knight proved to be powerful on f5. However, the game Poettinger-Marentini, Triesen 2011, showed a simple defence: 19...g6! 20.♞d2 ♞d6.

11...♟xc3

Or 11...♟f6 12.cxd5 exd5 13.d4 ♞e7 14.♞ac1 ♞fd8 15.dxc5 ♟dxc5 16.♟d4±.

12.♟xc3 ♟f6 13.cxd5 ♟xd5 14.d4 cxd4 15.♟xd4 ♟xg2 16.♟xg2 ♞c8 17.♞ac1.

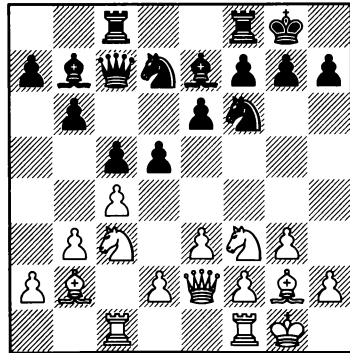


White is slightly better and went on to win in Dizdar-Naumkin, Voskresensk 1990. Black's queenside pawns and the c6-square are sensitive.

11.♞ac1

11.♟h4 at once also deserves consideration.

11...♞c7



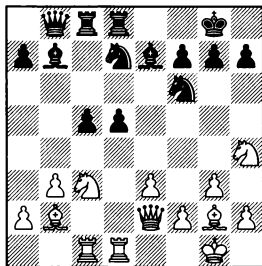
12.♟h4!?

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

In my opinion, this brain-child of Malakhov is the only real way for White to set problems to Black. 12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♙xd5 14.e4 ♙b7 15.d4 ♖b8 16.♗f1 cxd4 17.♘xd4 ♗xc1 18.♙xc1 ♗d8 19.♙f4 ♘e5 20.b4 is totally equal. Marin claims an advantage for White, but after 20...♗d6 21.♗d2 ♖c7 22.b5 ♙f6 23.♘c6 ♙xc6 24.♗xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♙xe5 it is high time to sign a draw.

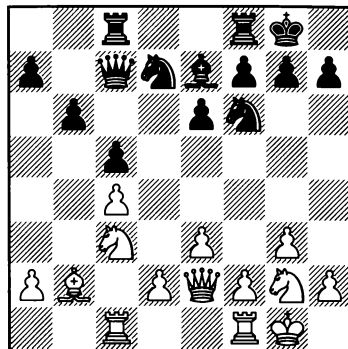
12...dxc4

If Black waits too long with this exchange, we could anticipate it by taking on d5 and c5. My game Delchev-Cornilius, Benasque 2011, reached this position:



16...♖a8 17.♘f5 ♙f8, when the active knight on f5 enabled the combination 18.♘xd5! ♘xd5 (or 18...♙xd5 19.♗xd5! ♘xd5 20.♘h6+ ♘h8 21.♖h5 ♘7f6 22.♙xf6 ♘xf6 23.♖f5 ♖b8 24.♘xf7+ ♘g8 25.♖e6) 19.♘h6+ ♘h8 20.♖h5 ♘7f6 21.♙xf6 gxf6 (21...♘xf6 22.♖xf7 gxf6 23.♙xb7) 22.♙e4 1-0.

13.bxc4 ♙xg2 14.♘xg2



White has obtained a good version of the pawn structure which I have considered in line A. The rook is useless on c8, but that is balanced by the equally misplaced c1-rook. The d7-knight should lose time to reach its best square c6. In Malakhov-Potkin, Moscow 2010, Black tried to save such a redeployment with:

14...♖c6

I see here at least two good ways to expand on the kingside: 15.e4 ♗cd8 16.e5 ♘e8 17.♘e4 f6 18.exf6 ♘exf6 19.♘g5 e5 20.♙xe5± or the standard 15.d3, followed by f4,g4, f5.

The stem game went instead 15.f4 ♘e4 when 16.♘xe4 ♖xe4 17.d3 ♖c6 18.e4 ♗cd8 19.♘e3 ♙f6 20.e5 ♙e7 21.f5 would have also seized the initiative.

Part 8

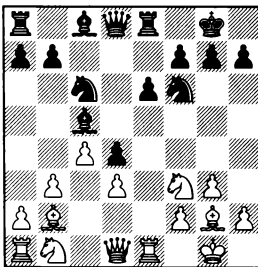
Complete Games

15. Sherbakov–Grigoriants Moscow 1999

1.c4 e6 2.♟f3 ♟f6 3.g3 d5 4.♞g2
♞e7 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3 c5 7.♞b2 ♟c6
8.e3 d4 9.exd4 cxd4 10.♞e1 ♞c5

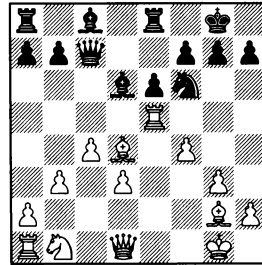
This is the best place for the bishop. It not only protects the d4-pawn, but also bars the fifth rank to White's rook so it cannot reach b5. However, Black's move order is probably not accurate. He should play 10...♞e8 first in order to avoid the exchanges after 11.♟e5! ♟xe5 12.♞xe5 ♞d6 13.♞xc5 ♞xc5 14.♞a3. It is generally beneficial to White to trade these two minor pieces. In the game, White still has to work hard to achieve them.

11.d3 ♞e8



12.♞a3!

White often plays here 12.♟e5 (or 12.a3 a5 13.♟e5). After 12...♟xe5 13.♞xe5 ♞c7?! 14.f4 ♟d6 15.♟xd4! gives White compensation for the exchange although the position remains very complex:



15...♟xe5 16.♟xe5 ♞e7 17.♟c3 ♟d7 18.d4 ♟xe5 19.fxex5 ♞f8 20.♟b5 f6 21.♞e2 ♞b8 22.♟d6±. The same sacrifice is possible with the insertion of 12.a3 a5 and then 13.♟e5 ♟xe5 14.♞xe5 ♞c7?! 15.f4 ♟d6 16.♟xd4 ♟xe5 17.♟xe5 ♞e7 18.♟c3 ♟d7, but here best is 19.♟d4 (instead of 19.d4 ♟xe5 20.fxex5 ♞f8 21.♟b5 f6 22.♟d6 ♞c7 23.♞e2 ♞b6∞) 19...♞b8 20.♞g4 f5 21.♞e2 b6 22.♟b5 ♟b7 23.♟xb7 ♞xb7 24.♟c3 ♟f6 25.♞e1, with pressure.

These problems of Black have a simple solution, though: instead of 13...♞c7, Black should play 13...

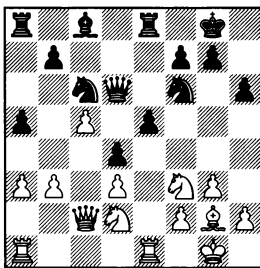
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♚e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

♞d6!, achieving comfortable equality. For example: 14.f4 ♖b8 15.a3 (or 15.♘d2 ♙d7 16.♞e2 ♙c6 17.♞f1 ♙xg2 18.♞xg2 ♙b4 19.♘e4 ♘xe4 20.♞xe4=) 15...a5 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 ♙xb4 18.♘a3 ♙d7 19.♘b5 ♙xb5 20.♞xb5 b6.

12...♙xa3

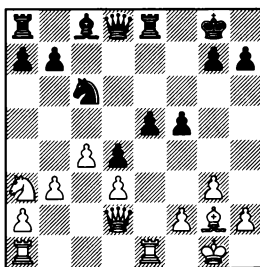
Black has also tried:

a) 12...♙d6 13.♙xd6 ♞xd6 14.a3 a5 15.♘bd2 h6 16.♞c2 e5 17.c5



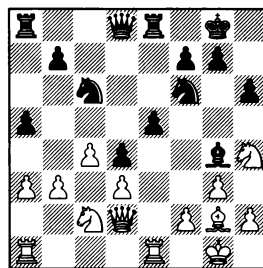
White has a clear plan to advance his queenside pawns. Damjanovic-Nikcevic, Igalo 1994, saw further 17...♞f8 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♞xe4 ♙f5 20.♞ee1 ♙h7 21.♘d2 ♘h8 22.♞ab1 f5 23.b4 axb4 24.axb4 ♞a3 25.♘c4±.

b) 12...♘d7 13.♘fd2! ♙xa3 14.♘xa3 ♘c5 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.♙xe4 f5 17.♙g2 e5 18.♞d2±



White is far ahead with his queenside plan and went on to win in Obukhov-Kolomensky, Nizh-nij Tagil 2007: 18...♞e7 19.♘c2 a5 20.f4 ♞d6 21.fxe5 ♞xe5 22.♞xe5 ♞xe5 23.♞e1 ♞f6 24.♞f4 h6 25.♞c7 ♘h7 26.♞e8 ♞g5 27.♙d5 ♘b4 28.♙g8+ ♘h8 29.♘e1 ♙e6 30.♞xa8 ♞e3+ 31.♘f1 ♙xg8 32.♞f7 1-0.

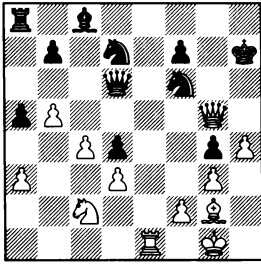
13.♘xa3 e5 14.♘c2 a5 15.a3 ♙f5 16.♘h4 ♙g4 17.♞d2 h6



A critical position. White has good prospects on the left wing, but he should think about prophylactics, too. 18.h3! ♙d7 19.b4 axb4 20.axb4 ♞xa1 21.♞xa1 would have been the right course to take since 18.b4, as played in the game, misses 18...axb4 19.axb4 ♞xa1 20.♞xa1 e4! 21.dxe4 d3 22.♘e3 ♙e2 23.f3 g6 with double-edged play.

18.b4 g5 19.b5 ♘b8 20.h3 ♙c8 21.♘f3± ♞d6 22.h4 (22.♘xg5!) 22...g4 23.♘fxd4 (23.♘xe5!+-) 23...exd4 24.♞xh6 ♞xe1+ 25.♞xe1 ♘bd7 26.♞g5+ ♘h7

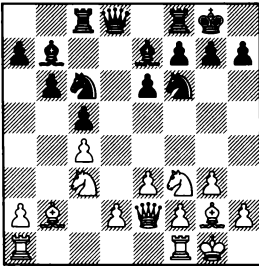
Now 27.♘xd4 wins at once, but quite amazingly, Sherbakov somehow fails to convert his advantage.



27.♙e4+ ♖xe4 28.♗xe4
 ♗g6 29.♗d8 b6 30.♖xd4 ♖c5
 31.♗f4?? (31.♗e5!+-) ♖xd3
 32.♗f6 ♙e6 33.♗xa8 ♗xf6 34.♗e4+
 ♗g6 35.♖xe6 fxe6 36.♗b7+
 ♗g7 37.♗e4+ ♗g6 38.♗b7+ ♗g7
 39.♗e4+ ♗g6 ½-½

16. Markus-Perunovic Subotica 02.09.2008

1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.b3
 ♙e7 5.♙g2 0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.♙b2
 ♖c6 8.e3 b6 9.♖c3 dxc4 10.bxc4
 ♙b7 11.♗e2 ♗c8



Black anticipates the plan with d2-d4, but against the other dangerous plan – f2-f4, his rook is even worse than on its initial square. From c8 it does not support the only possible counterplay based on ...a6, ...b6-b5.

12.♖e1!? (12.♗ad1!?) 12...♗d7
 13.f4 ♗f8 14.d3

14.♗d1 is a valuable alternative. In some variations White may need the additional control over b5 which ♗e2 provides.

The game Panchenko-Kucera, Pardubice 1992 went on with:

14...♖e8. This is a thematic manoeuvre. From d6 the knight will be eyeing f5 and supporting the breakthrough ...b5.

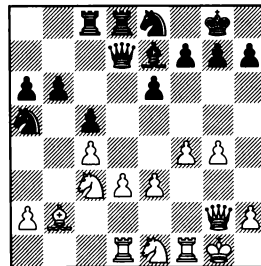
15.g4

The flexible 15.d3 also deserves attention. It may save g4, as in the variation 15...♖b4 (15...♖d6 16.♖f3 ♖d6 17.♖e5 ♗c7 18.e4 ♖c6 19.♖xc6 ♗xc6 20.f5↑.

15...♖a5

15...♗f6 looks safer: 16.d3 (16.g5 ♗xc3 17.♗xc3 ♖d6∞) 16...♖d6 17.♖f3.

16.d3 ♗g2 17.♗g2 a6

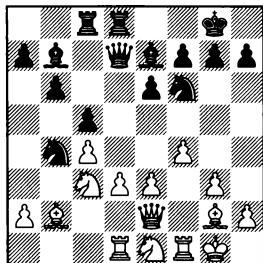


White chose here 18.a4 ♗f6 19.♗b1 ♗b8 20.g5 ♗xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗xa4 when 22.♗f3 ♗d7 23.♗h3 would have given him a nice attacking position. However, he could

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

have saved the prophylaxis in favour of the straightforward 18.♟f3 ♘d6 19.f5 b5 20.e4!, for instance: 20...bxc4 21.e5 ♘e8 22.f6 ♙f8 23.fxg7 ♙xg7 24.♟g5±.

14...♟b4 (or 15...♘d6 16.♟f3) 15.♙d1



15...a6

It is curious to investigate:

15...♙xg2.

The ♗d7 suggests that White's knight would be more active on f3 rather than on g2 so we recapture:

16.♗xg2 a6 17.a3 ♘c6 18.♟f3

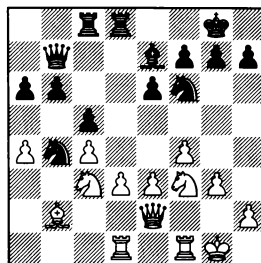
18.g4 looks premature due to 18...b5! 19.g5 ♘e8 20.cxb5 axb5 21.♟xb5 ♙b8 22.a4 ♘d6.

18...♗b7 19.a4!

Again, White has no reason to give the opponent counterplay. After 19.g4 b5 20.f5 bxc4 21.g5 ♘d5 22.♟xd5 ♙xd5 23.f6 ♙d6 24.dxc4 ♙xd1 25.♙xd1 ♙d8 the game is balanced.

19...♟b4 20.♗e2

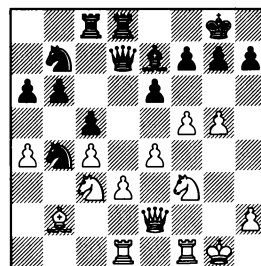
It is funny to watch the engines preferring Black here.



White has good control of the centre and a clear plan on the king-side with e3-e4-e5, ♟e4, f4-f5. The mere fact that Houdini 2 at depth 22 gives as a first line 20...♟g4 21.h3 ♘f6 reveals the truth – Black has no counterplay. White can follow 22.g4 ♙f8 23.e4 ♙c7 24.e5 ♘e8 25.f5 ♗c6 26.♟e4± h6 (26...♙cd7 27.fxe6 fxe6 28.♟fg5+-) 27.♙d2 when 27...♗xa4 loses to 28.fxe6 fxe6 29.♟fg5! hxg5 30.♗f3+-.

Let us examine now a more sensible retort:

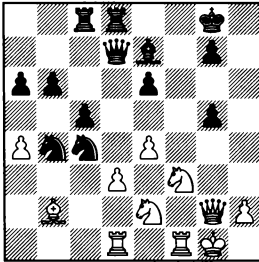
20...♘e8 21.g4 ♘d6 22.e4 ♗d7 which enables the manoeuvre ...♘d6-b7-a5-c6.



23.f5 ♘b7 24.g5

Now 24...exf5 25.exf5 ♘d6 26.♟e5± or 24...♗e8 25.f6 ♙f8 26.fxg7 ♙xg7 27.e5± are clearly gloom so Black follows up his plan:

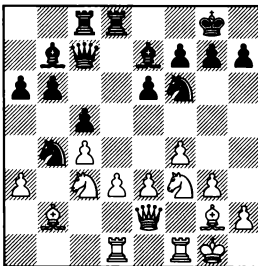
24...♖a5 25.g6! fxg6 26.fxg6
hxg6 27.♖g2 g5 28.♗e2 ♖xc4



The battle has suddenly heated. Both sides have fulfilled their plans and it is time for calculations. 29.♗xg7 is probably not winning although it is a close call for Black. The kill is a little unexpected:

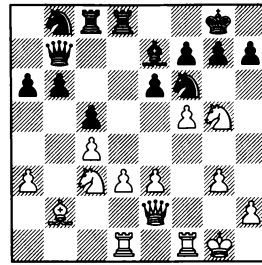
29.dxc4!! ♖xd1 30.♖g4! ♖d6
31.♗e5 ♖d7 32.♗f4+–, threatening
♗g6, ♖h5.

16.♗f3 ♖c7 17.a3



It is time to take stock. White has regrouped successfully, his pieces are ready for a kingside assault. On the contrary, Black's counterplay is nowhere to be seen. No wonder the game did not last long.

17...♗c6 18.♗g5 ♗b8 19.♗xb7
♖xb7 20.f5



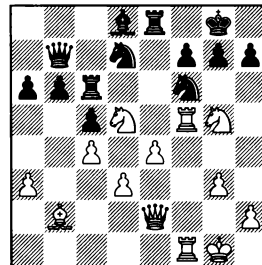
20...exf5

Perunovic could have conceded a clear advantage after 20...e5 21.♗f3 ♗c6 22.♖g2, but he prefers to open the centre.

21.♖xf5 ♗bd7?! 22.♗d5!

Game over – 22...♗xd5 23.♖h5.

22...♖e8 23.♖df1 ♖c6 24.e4 ♗d8

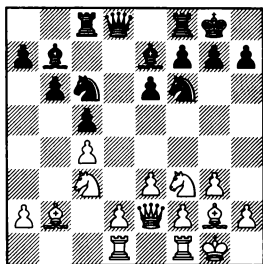


25.♗xf7 ♗xf7 26.♖h5+ ♗g8
27.♗xf6+ 1–0

17. Kharlov–Kosyrev
Samara 20.06.2000

1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.♗g2 ♗f6 4.♗f3
♗e7 5.0–0 0–0 6.b3 b6 7.♗b2 ♗b7
8.e3 c5 9.♖e2 ♗c6 10.♗c3 dxc4
11.bxc4 ♖c8 12.♖ad1

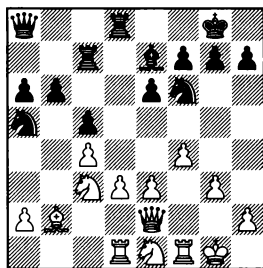
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♚e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



12...♘a5 13.♘e1

This is the common continuation of course, but I think that White should persist with the flexible approach by 13.d3!? as in the next commented game.

13...♙xg2 14.♙xg2 ♖c7 15.d3 ♗a8+ 16.♙g1 ♖d8 17.f4 a6



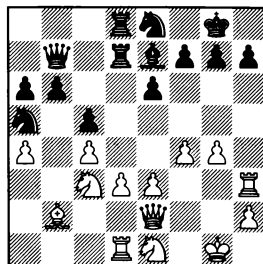
18.g4

White chooses to attack on the h-file. In my opinion, 18.f5!? was a perfectly sound alternative.

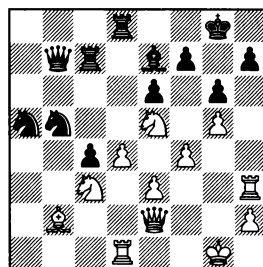
18...♗b7 19.a4 ♘e8 20.♖f3 ♖cd7 21.♖h3

It becomes evident that Black is behind with his counterplay. If he tries to support the breakthrough ...b6-b5 with 21...♘d6, then 22.g5 g6 23.♗g4 would be extremely un-

pleasant. That is why Kosyrev tries to distract his opponent from the right wing, at least for a while:



21...b5!? 22.axb5 axb5 23.cxb5 c4 24.d4 ♘d6 25.g5 g6 26.♟f3 ♘xb5 27.♘e5 ♖c7



28.♗f2?!

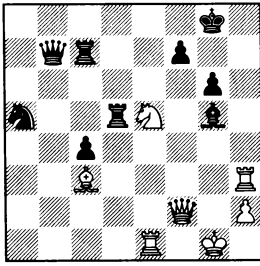
Here White missed the hit 28.♘xf7!! ♙xf7 29.♖xh7+ ♙g8 30.♖h6 ♙f8 31.♖xg6+ ♙g7 32.♖xe6±.

28...♘xc3 29.♙xc3 ♖d5

29...♘c6 allows the same tactics – 30.♘xf7!.

30.e4 ♖b5 31.♗e1

Kharlov is hesitant again. After 31.f5! exf5 32.exf5 ♙xg5 33.fxg6 hxg6 34.d5! ♖xd5 35.♙e1+–,

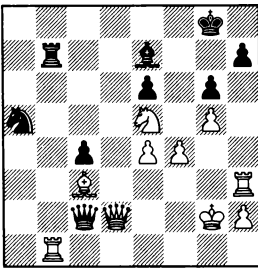


all the files and diagonals are gaping wide open for the invading white army.

31...♖b6 32.♔h1 (32.♔g2! ♖b2+ 33.♔h1!+-) 32...♖b7 33.d5 ♖b1 34.dxe6

It was better to keep the d-pawn: 34.♔g2!+-.

34...fxe6 35.♔g2 ♖b3 36.♖xb1 ♖c2+ 37.♖d2



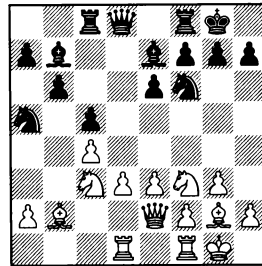
37...♖xe4?! 38.♖f3 ♖xb1 39.♖d4?

39.♔g4! retained the attack. This move would have been ineffective had Black taken on b1 two moves earlier due to 39...♖xe4+. After White's mistake, Black has plenty of counterplay to keep the balance.

39...♔b3 40.♖xc4 ♔c5 41.♔d3 ♖c2+ 42.♔f2 ♖d7 43.♖e3 ♖d2 44.♖f1 ♖d5 45.♖b5 ♔f7 46.♖c6 ♖d3 47.♖f3 ♖xe3 48.♖xe3 ♔e4 49.♖xe4 ♖xc3 50.♔g4 ♔d6 51.♖b7+ ♔c7 52.♔e5+ ♔g7 53.♔f3 ♖c4 54.♔d4 ♖xd4 55.♖xc7+ ♔g8 56.♖e5 ♖xe5 57.fxe5 ♔f7 58.♔f3 ♔e7 59.♔e4 ½-½

18. A.Sokolov-Thesing Berlin 1993

1.c4 e6 2.♔f3 d5 3.e3 ♔f6 4.b3 c5 5.♔b2 ♔c6 6.g3 ♔e7 7.♔g2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 9.♔c3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♔b7 11.♖e2 ♖c8 12.♖ad1 ♔a5 13.d3



The idea of this move is to see where Black's queen is going. For example, after 13...♖d7, White could gain a tempo by 14.♔e5 ♖c7 15.f4, or even change plans by opting for 14.e4 ♖fd8 15.e5 ♔e8 16.♔e4.

13...♔d7

This game is interesting mostly because it is a rare example where White gladly trades queens and still retains an attack. Another particularity is the pawn on d3 which

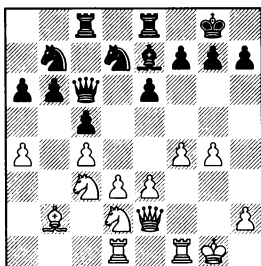
1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

allows ♘d2 instead of the common ♘e1.

14.♘d2 ♙xg2 15.♙xg2 ♖c7
16.f4 a6 17.a4

I prefer 17.f5! with an attack in the event of 17...b5 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.♖g4.

17...♖c6+ 18.♙g1 ♜fe8 19.g4
♘b7



20.♖f3!?

A very original decision! The knight on d2 does not support well the attack with f4-f5 so White embraces “a slow ball” strategy. His only weakness on d3 will then be defended by the king so White is not running any risk.

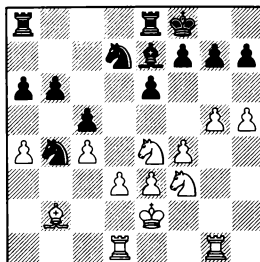
20...♖xf3 21.♘xf3 ♜cd8 22.♙f2
♘a5 23.♙e2 ♘c6

Sokolov has everything under control and now he can launch a pawn storm on the kingside.

24.g5 ♘b4 25.h4?!

White should have prevented 25...f5 26.gxf6 gxf6 by 25.♙g1!

25...♘b8? 26.♘e4 ♘d7 27.♙g1
♙f8 28.h5 ♜a8



Black apparently hoped that without queens White's attack would not be decisive, but he was wrong.

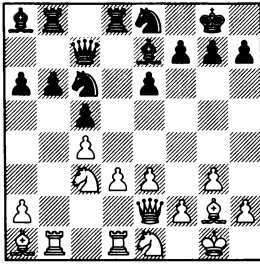
29.g6 fxg6 30.♘fg5 ♙xg5
31.♘xg5

White misses the chance to win beautifully with 31.hxg6!!+- ♙f6 (31...hxg6 32.♙xg5) 32.gxh7 ♙f7 33.♘d6+ ♙e7 34.♘xe8.

31...♙e7 (31...e5!) 32.♘xh7
gxh5 33.♙xg7+ ♘d6 34.♘g5 ♜g8
35.♜h7 e5 36.♘f7+ ♙e6 37.♘g5+
♘d6 38.fxe5+ ♘xe5 39.♘e4+
♙e6 40.♙xe5 ♘xe5 41.♜e7+ ♙f5
42.♜f1+ ♙g6 43.♜f6 mate! 1-0

19. Zaichik-Tiviakov Moscow 1994

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 e6 4.♙g2
♙b7 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.b3 0-0 7.♙b2 c5
8.♘c3 d5 9.e3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♘c6
11.d3 ♖c7 12.♖e2 a6 13.♜ab1
♜ab8 14.♙a1 ♜fd8 15.♜fd1 ♙a8
16.♘e1 ♘e8



The knight is heading for d6. From there, it not only supports ...b6-b5, but restrains the c3-knight.

17.f4 d6 18.a4

Vokac-A.Ivanov, Prague 2010 saw 18.d4 dxe4 19.e4 b5 when 20.g4! g6 21.e2 would have provoked an important weakness of the long diagonal. Black should probably plug it with 21...f6, but the threat of g4-g5 would remain after 22.g4 b4 23.e8a8 e8a8 24.a3 d6 25.cxb5 axb5 26.exb5.

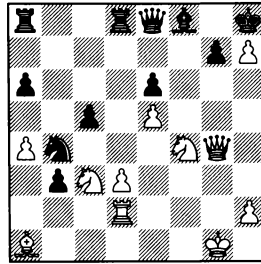
18...d4 19.e8a8 e8a8 20.e4 d6 21.e2

White makes a useful move using the fact that the opponent has not serious counterplay.

21...c6 22.f3 f6

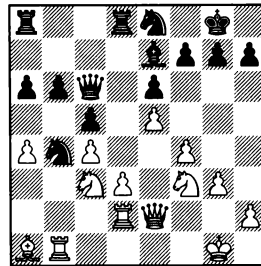
The engine Houdini suggests the dubiously looking manoeuvre 22...d6 23.g4 b7 24.f5 a5, obviously heading for c6. "He" might be able to save his skin in variations of type of 25.e5 f8 26.d5 h6 27.dh3 b5 28.fxe6 fxe6 29.g5 bxc4

30.gxh6 db3 31.h7+ h8 32.exb3 cxb3 33.d4 e8 34.g4→,



but humans tend to avoid them with the defending side.

23.e5 f7



24.g4

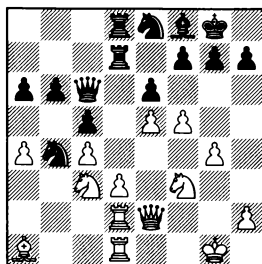
Game 18 A.Sokolov-Thesing has taught us that endgames in this structure offer White an absolutely safe position with a clear plan on the kingside: 24.e4!? eac8 25.cxc6 exc6 26.bbd1 h5 27.dg2 g6 28.h3 dg7 29.g4±.

24...a7 25.f5 ead7 26.bbd1 f8

A critical moment. White should have played here 27.f6! with an edge. Instead, he wastes a tempo

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

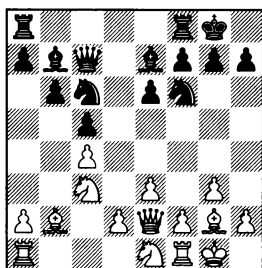
and Tiviakov gets just enough counterplay to maintain the balance:



27.♙b2?! ♘c7 28.f6 b5! 29.axb5 axb5 30.fxg7 ♙xg7 31.♘e4 bxc4 32.dxc4 ♙xd2 33.♙xd2 ♙xd2 34.♘fxd2 ♙a4 35.♘f3 ♙a2 36.♙f1 ♙b1+ 37.♘e1 ♘ca6 38.♘c3 ♙g6 39.♘e4 h5 40.gxh5 ♙f5+ 41.♙f3 ♘c6 42.♘f2 ♘ab8 43.♙xf5 ½-½

20. Pigusov-Zontakh Sochi 06.05.2007

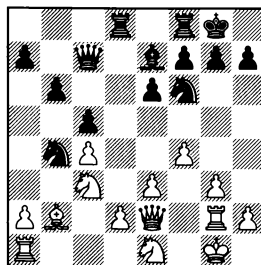
1.♟f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♙b7 4.♙g2 e6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.b3 0-0 7.♙b2 c5 8.♘c3 d5 9.e3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♘c6 11.♙e2 ♙c7 12.♘e1 (I recommend 12.♙fd1)



12...a6

It seems reasonable to organise counterplay with ...b5.

12...♙ad8 13.f4 ♘b4 is also possible, but White has some initiative after 14.♙f2!? (14.♙xb7 ♙xb7 15.a3 ♘c6 16.g4 ♘e8! 17.♙b1 ♘d6 18.♙a1 f5 turns the tables in Black's favour.) 14...♙xg2 15.♙xg2



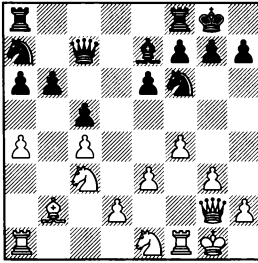
Ribli suggests here to reduce White's attacking potential with 15...♙b7! 16.g4 ♘e4 17.a3 ♘xc3 18.♙xc3 ♘c6, with a defensible position.

Instead, the game Sorokin-Slipak, Villa Martelli 1997, continued with 15...♙d7 16.g4 ♘e8 17.g5 ♘d6 18.♘f3 ♘f5 19.♘e5 ♙b7, when 20.a3! ♘c6 21.♘g4 ♙d7 22.♘e4 ♙fd8 23.♙c3 a6 24.♙b1 would have been gloom for Black because of the lack of useful moves. For instance, 24...♘a7 loses to 25.♘ef6+.

13.f4 ♘a7 14.a4

14.g4 turned well for White after 14...♙ab8 15.g5 ♘e8 16.♘e4 ♘c6 17.♙f3→f6 18.♙h3, Galliamova-Botsari, Innsbruck 1987, but critical is 14...b5! 15.g5 ♘e8 16.♘e4 ♘d6. e.g. 17.♙e5 ♘c6 18.♘xc5 ♘xe5 19.♘xb7 ♘xb7 20.fxe5 bxc4∞.

14...♙xg2 15.♙xg2



15...♖c6?!

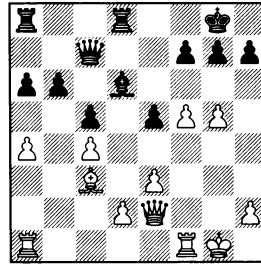
This move may be principled because it brings another hit on the critical square b5, but it cuts off the a7-knight from the kingside. 15...♞ad8! 16.g4 ♖e8 was preferable: 17.♖e4 ♖c6 (17...♖d6 18.♖xd6 ♖xd6 19.♖f3 ♖c6∞) 18.g5 ♖d6∞.

16.♖f3 ♞fd8 17.♞e2

I see no need for this retreat. 17.g4 ♞ab8 18.f5 gives White nice attacking prospects.

Now Black succeeds to trade a couple of minor pieces.

17...♖e4 18.♖e5 ♖xc3 19.♖xc3 ♞c7 20.g4 ♖c6 21.g5 ♖xe5 22.♖xe5 ♖d6 23.♖c3 e5 24.f5



Despite the exchanges, White has a clear positional advantage.

24...e4 25.♞h5 ♞c6 26.♖h1 ♞e8 27.♞f2 ♞a7 28.♞g1 g6 29.♞h6 ♖f8 30.♞h4 ♖g7 31.♖xg7 ♖xg7 32.♞g4 ♖g8 33.♞h6 gxf5? 34.♞h4 ♞e6 35.♞xh7+ ♖f8 36.♞h6 ♞e5 37.♞f6 ♞a1+ 38.♖g2 ♞d1 39.♞xf5 1-0

Index of Variations

Part 1. Anti-QGA

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3

3...c5 (3...b5 14; 3...♞c6 14; 3...♙g4 15; 3...♙e6 15) 4.♙xc4 ♟f6 5.0-0 e6
6.♙e2 a6 7.♞d1! 19

6...♞c6 7.♞d1 ♙e7 (7...a6 8.d4 19) 8.♞c3 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 (9...♙c7 17)
10.exd4 17
10.♞xd4 18

Part 2. Reversed Benoni

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 d4

3.g3 ♞c6 29

3.e3 ♞c6 (3...c5 42) 4.exd4 30

4. b4 dxe3 (4...♙g4 32) 5.fxe3 ♞xb4 6.d4 e5 32
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5.b3 (5.♙c2 87) ♞bd7 (5...♙d6 88; 5...b6 89) 6.♙c2 ♙e7 90

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1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♞c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2
0-0 8.♙e2

8...♞e8 9.0-0 dxc4 120

9...e5 121

9...b6 122

8...♞e7 9.0-0 b6 125

9...e5 125

9...♞e8 126

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1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3

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4...♘f6 154

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5...c5 157

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Part 8. Anti-Queen's Gambit II

1.♟f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

6...c5 7.♙b2 ♘c6 8.e3 b6 9.♞c3 ♙b7 10.cxd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xd5 ♞xd5 12.d4
♙ad8 185; 12...♞a5 186; 12...♘b4 186

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9...♙a6 195

6...b6 7.♙b2 ♙b7 8.e3 ♘bd7 9.♞c3 (9.♞e2 a5 196) 9...♘e4 197

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Alexander Delchev is
European Grand Prix
winner in 2004.

He has played for Bulgaria
in 6 Olympiads. His best
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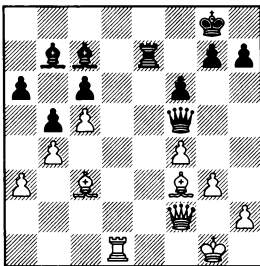


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missed to get a clear advantage after 21.♔f3! Then 21...♖xf4 loses to 22.g3 ♖xb4 (or 22...♖c4 23.♖xc4 bxc4 24.♔d7 ♖c8 25.♔d4 ♖e6 26.♔h5+-) 23.♔d4 ♖a5 24.♔h4 g6 25.♔d5 cxd5 26.♖f2.

Black can double his rooks on the e-file with 21...♖ae8, but 22.g3 ♖h3 (22...♖h6 23.f5! ♖3e7 24.f6 gxf6 25.♔d4± looks crushing.) 23.♖f2 ♖3e7 24.♖fe1 f6 25.♔c3 ♖f5 26.♖xe7 ♖xe7 27.a3±.



Compared to the game, here my f3-bishop dominates its poor counterpart on b7. Therefore, I can even swap rooks, retaining the edge.

Play might continue 27...h5 28.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 29.♖xe1 ♔f7 30.♖e2 g6 31.♔e4 ♖g4 32.♖xg4 hxg4 33.f5 g5 34.♔f2± and the g4-pawn is about to perish – 34...♔e7 35.♔e3 ♔f7 (35...♔c8 36.♔xc6 ♔xf5 37.♔b7 ♔d7 38.♔xa6 f5 39.♔b7; 35...♔e5 36.♔d4!) 36.♔d3 ♔c8 37.♔e4.

21...♖xd3 22.♖xd3 ♔d8

22...♖e8! was more accurate – 23.g3 ♖e7 24.♔f3 a5 25.♖c3 ♖e3+ 26.♖xe3 ♖xe3 27.♔f2 ♔d3 28.♔e2 ♔d8 29.a3 f6 30.♔c3 axb4 31.axb4 ♔f7±.

23.♖c3 ♖h6 24.♖f3 (24.♔g4 ♔c8 25.♔xc8 ♖xc8 26.g3 ♖e8 27.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 28.♖xe1 ♔f8=)

24...f6 25.g3?!

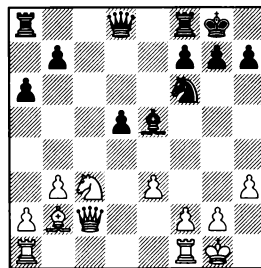
Only 25.♖b3+ ♔f8 (25...♔d5 26.g3 ♔f8 27.♔d3 ♖g6 28.♔xd5 cxd5 29.♔f2 ♖f5 30.♔f3 h5±) 26.♔e5! ♔xe5 27.fxe5 ♔c8 28.exf6 gxf6 29.h3 keeps some edge.

Now Black's bishop enters play and I cannot make any progress.

25...♔c8 26.♖e3 ♔f8 27.♔f3 ♔d7 28.♔d3 ♔e8 29.♔xd8 ♔xd8 30.♖d3 ♔c7 31.h4 ♖g6 32.♖xg6 hxg6 33.♔f2 a5 34.a3 axb4 35.axb4 ♔d7 36.♔e3 ♔f7 37.g4 ♔b8 38.g5 ♔c7 39.♔c3 ♔d8 40.♔e4 ♔e7 41.♔f2 ♔d8 Draw.

13. Delchev–Van Wely Melilla, 21.11.2011

1.♔f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♔f6 4.♔c3 e6 5.b3 ♔bd7 6.♖c2 ♔d6 7.♔b2 0-0 8.♔e2 a6 9.d4 e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♔xe5 12.0-0 ♔g4 13.♔xe5 ♔xe5 14.♔xg4 ♔xg4 15.h3 ♔f6

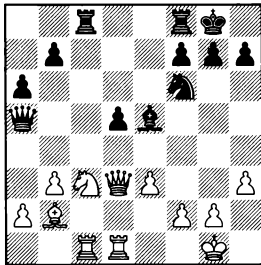


16.♖f5

4.♟c3 e6 5.b3 ♘bd7 6.♞c2 ♙d6 7.♙b2 0-0 8.♙e2!?

I already had this position last year in the same team tournament against Mchedlishvili, but this game was not published in any database so my opponent did not know it. The idea of the queen move is to leave the open c-file with tempo. However, the queen would probably stand better on d3. For instance:

16.♞ac1! ♞c8 17.♞fd1 ♞a5 where Black is playing for two results only. The game Jovanic-Sedlak, Varazdin 2004, went 18.♞d2 ♞fd8 19.♟e2 ♞xd2 20.♞xd2 ♞xc1+ 21.♙xc1±. 18.♞d3 was stronger.



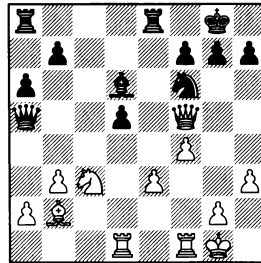
Now 18...♙xc3 19.♙xc3 ♞xa2 20.♙xf6± is clearly out of question, so Black should probably concede a small edge after 18...♞fd8 19.a3 ♞c6 20.b4 ♞c7 21.b5 ♞c4 22.bxa6 bxa6 23.♟e4 ♞xc1 24.♟xf6+ ♙xf6 25.♞xc1 ♞b6 26.♙xf6 ♞xf6 27.♞c3 ♞d6 28.a4 h6 29.a5±. It is not a fun to defend this ending.

16...♞e8 17.♞ac1 ♞a5?!

17...♞c8 was better. Then 18.♟a4 ♙xb2 19.♟xb2 is rather dull so White has to follow up with 18.f4 ♙xc3 19.♙xc3 ♟e4 (19...♞xe3?? 20.♙xf6) 20.♙d4 ♞c6 21.♞xc6 bxc6 22.♞c1, with a complex game. The

text is sharper, but the ensuing complications favour White.

18.f4! ♙d6 19.♞cd1!



19.♞fd1 is dubious due to 19... ♞b6! 20.♟xd5 ♟xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞xe3+ 22.♟h1 ♞xf4.

19.♟a4 ♟e4 20.♙d4 looks attractive as the d5-pawn is weak. Then mundane continuations as 20...♙f8 are in White's favour: 21.♞fd1 b5 22.♟c3 g6 23.♟xe4! (23. ♞xd5 ♞ad8 24.♟xe4 ♞xd5 25.♟f6+ ♟h8 26.♟xe8+ ♞xd4 27.exd4 ♙h6 28.♞c8 ♙xf4) 23...gxf5 24.♟f6+ ♟h8 25.♟xe8+ f6 26.♟c7 ♞b8 27.♞c2. Most black pawns are weak.

However, the paradoxical 20... ♞ad8! maintains the balance. The fine point of this move is seen in the variation 21.♙b6 ♞d2 22.♞d1 ♞e2 23.♞de1 ♞d2 24.♙xd8 ♞xd8 and suddenly White has not a good defence against ...b5.

19...♙f8?!

This is outright bad. My opponent was already in time trouble and he definitely missed my next move. He should have played:

19...♞xe3! 20.♟xd5 (20.♞xd5? ♟xd5 21.♟xd5 ♞c5 22.♟xe3 ♞xe3+